

# BURMESE DRAMA

*A Study, with Translations, of Burmese Plays*

BY

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## PREFACE

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M.H.A.

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# INTRODUCTION

## 1. THE RISE OF A VERNACULAR LITERATURE IN BURMA

BURMA is a small country lying between the two great countries of India and China, and at a first glance it may perhaps be thought that Burmese civilization has little of originality or individuality, and that it is only a minor branch of the Indian and Chinese civilizations. That is not the case. The peninsula of Indo-China shades into India and China along its borders, but Burma proper, where Burmese is spoken,<sup>1</sup> lies away from these borders, and therefore preserves special characteristics of her own. Surrounded on three sides by highlands and on the fourth by the sea, Burma has always remained insular, more insular even than England. The barriers, however, were not impassable, and there were routes from India and China along which foreign influences came, but in such a restricted way that Burma could absorb them without losing her individuality. Even now, when with better sea communications foreign influences come in more extensively, the power of absorption possessed by Burma and the Burmese still leave them their individuality, and they are still a nation with a civilization of their own.

According to early chronicles which most English scholars, except Mr G. E. Harvey, have accepted as quite reliable, the kingdom of Prome in Lower Burma was flourishing as a civilized State by about the fifth century before Christ. A few centuries earlier the first kingdom, named Tagaung, in Upper Burma, is said to have been founded by a king who came overland from India. He found the natives quite civilized and willing to be more so. That kingdom was destroyed, but was revived and restored by another king from India during the lifetime of the Buddha. It, too, was destroyed and the kingdom of Prome was later founded by a prince of Tagaung. Prome is generally believed to have dominated the regions around

<sup>1</sup> Burma proper is the valley of the Irrawaddy. On the west of it are the Chins and allied tribes, on the north Kachins, and on the east the Shans. They were under the Burmese kings and are now under the Government of Burma. Being backward races, except the Shans, they have no writing.

it, carrying on trade with India and the rest of Indo-China. During this period Burmese dancing and music and poetry, as embodied in songs, perhaps assumed definite and national forms. But there was no writing. The kings that came from India probably knew writing, but their knowledge was perhaps limited; in any case, it never reached the people. The introduction of Buddhism into the country brought no writing, as it came through traders whose knowledge of religious learning was meagre. The few religious tracts preserved in monasteries were looked upon merely as curious and sacred objects. The religion, feeble from the beginning, decayed and soon disappeared. The kingdom came to an end in the first century A.D.<sup>1</sup>

A new kingdom was founded in Upper Burma at Pagan, which controlled the land and river trade-routes, and as a result of its commercial advantages, it became a powerful kingdom with the ascension to the throne of Anawrahta in 1044. From that point Burmese history ceases to be conjectural. Through the influence of the learned and saintly monk, Shin Arahan, Buddhism in one of its purest forms was introduced into the kingdom by Anawrahta. With it, writing was also introduced. The alphabet was the 'Square Pali', and the literature the *Three Pitakas* embodying all the religious teachings in Pali. Curiously enough, the alphabet and the literature did not come directly from India, but from Burma itself—from the Talaing kingdom of Thaton. The Talaings were a branch of the Burmese race. Many think that they were a mixture of native tribes with Indian traders. I venture to disagree. The earliest inhabitants of Burma were Indonesians, who settled on the coast of Burma during successive 'drifts' of humanity from the west, through India, to further east. Later, there was an infiltration of Mongolian tribes, who came down the rivers from the North. Inland, where the Indonesian element was weak, the new-comers dominated and later became the Burmese; along the coast where the Indonesian element was strong the tribes united and became the Talaings. However, all this is mere conjecture. The early history of the Talaing kingdom of Thaton, which Anawrahta had to destroy to obtain possession of the alphabet and the *Three Pitakas*, is not known, except that it was perhaps in existence a few centuries before Christ and was under the influence

<sup>1</sup> Pe Maung Tin and G. H. Luce, *The Glass Palace Chronicle*; A. Phayre, *History of Burma*. G. E. Harvey in his *History of Burma* contends that the first Burmese kingdom was Prome, and that it flourished only in about the seventh century A.D.

of Hindu traders from South India. After the introduction of Buddhism into South India by Asoka in 261 B.C., the traders began to bring Buddhist elements to Thaton. With the establishment in the third or fourth century after Christ of the Hindu kingdoms in Java and Sumatra, Thaton became an important trading centre, and with the rise of a great Buddhist centre at Conjeeveram in Madras in the fifth century, the Talaings began to receive religious writings in Pali. From that time onwards, learning was definitely established in the kingdom, and, as a result, a Talaing literature came into being. Anawrahta was interested in Pali only, and therefore when he destroyed the city, he burnt all the manuscripts except those in Pali.<sup>1</sup>

The writing and learning that were thus introduced into Pagan took root at once. Prose and poetry as embodied in the language of the court and in songs had been in existence long before, though unwritten, and now the new learning turned them into written forms and began to develop them. Pali was studied everywhere, and in the newly-built temples with their crowded monastic life, works in Pali on religion, on Pali grammar and prosody, and on the legal code of Manu came to be produced.<sup>2</sup> Translations were also made, and soon Pagan became famous throughout India for its Pali scholarship. But

<sup>1</sup> The Burmese language belongs to the Tibeto-Burmese group, whereas the Talaing belongs to the Mon-Khmar group. In spite of Anawrahta's conquest and in spite of the fact that racially they were cousins, the Talaings became completely merged with the Burmese only in the eighteenth century. The probability of the Sanskrit drama reaching the Talaings is considered in chap. ii.

<sup>2</sup> G. E. Harvey, op. cit., pp. 59, 70.

The most famous for literary activity was the *Kyauku Ohnmin* temple. Though built perhaps even before Anawrahta, when a corrupted form of Buddhism was prevalent, it is still in an excellent condition (Harvey, p. 17).

The code of Manu was compiled originally in Sanskrit, during the period 200 B.C.-A.D. 200. Since that time it has been one of the chief sources of Hindu law (J. D. Mayne, *Hindu Law*). The Burmese received it in a Talaing-Pali version in which the sacerdotal element had been done away with. That explains why, although Manu is one of the chief sources also of Burmese Buddhist law, it has little in common with Hindu law. The existence of the code as the chief source of Talaing law (Harvey, op. cit., p. 111) raises again the question, how far were the Talaing writings under the influence of Sanskrit and its literature? We shall never know. When Anawrahta destroyed Talaing institutions and historical and literary works, he intended that all knowledge of the past greatness of the Talaings should pass into oblivion so as to smooth his way towards unifying Burma into one single State.

Pali has been, since 1044, the classical language of Burma.

## PREFACE

As a postgraduate research student working under the supervision of the Professor of English Literature, I wrote, at Trinity College, Dublin, a thesis entitled *A Comparative Study of Burmese with English and European Drama*. With the special permission of the Board of Trinity College and the supervising Professor, I spent three terms at the School of Oriental Studies (University of London), before submitting my thesis for the degree of Ph.D.

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in spite of its greatness in other directions, from being a great period of Burmese literature. The love of beauty, which is the basis of all literature, had adequate satisfaction in the developed art of architecture. The poets of Pagan wrote their poems in bricks, instead of words, and their pagodas are still famous. When one stands on the shore of the Irrawaddy and looks towards the ruins of Pagan, one is reminded of the delicate beauty of an incomplete poem.<sup>1</sup>

Pagan fell in 1287 as the result of the Tartar onslaught during the time of Kubla Khan, the Scourge of God, and the country broke up into several little States, each attempting to control the others. For the next fifty years, political struggles went on in the capitals, but they failed to disturb the peace of smaller towns and villages. Many who had grown tired of the strife around the thrones flocked to the quiet of the village monasteries in order to find peace. Religion went on undiminished, but the learning connected with it decayed, for the royal patronage was lacking. Architecture also decayed because there was no royal support and because the country had become poor. Men turned to literature for its own sake, and during this period Burmese prose and poetry assumed definite forms with fully developed diction, rhythm, rhyme and style.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Many temples and pagodas of the Pagan period are in an excellent state of preservation and are still in use as places of worship. Scott O'Connor's *Mandalay and Other Cities* contains fine illustrations of the more famous of these religious buildings.

The achievement of the Pagan kings, the 'Temple Builders', is summed up by Harvey thus: 'The legacy of their fleeting sway has enriched posterity for ever. It was they who made the sun-scorched wilderness, the solitary plain of Myingyan, to blossom forth into the architectural magnificence of Pagan. If they produced no nation-builder like Simon de Montfort, no lawgiver like Edward I, they unified Burma for more than two centuries, and that in itself was an achievement. But their role was æsthetic and religious rather than political. To them the world owes in great measure the preservation of Theravada Buddhism, one of the purest faiths mankind has ever known. Brahminism had strangled it in the land of its birth; in Ceylon its existence was threatened again and again; east of Burma it was not yet free from priestly corruptions; but the kings of Burma never wavered, and at Pagan the stricken faith found a city of refuge. Vainglorious tyrants built themselves lasting sepulchres, but none of these men has a tomb. . . . These men's magnificence went to glorify their religion, not to deck the tent wherein they camped during this transitory life.'—*History of Burma*, p. 70.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103. Since that time, prose and poetry show continuous development. The full history of Burmese literature still remains unwritten. However, the *Anthology of Burmese Literature*, a Government publication,

Though prose and poetry had thus assumed definite forms by about the fourteenth, or early fifteenth century, the drama was unknown until very much later. The first real Burmese drama appeared, though it had its origins some decades earlier, only towards the close of the eighteenth century, and during the next hundred years it developed and then decayed. Burmese dramatic literature developed in a historical sequence and in a way essentially similar to that of the Elizabethan drama. But why the similarity? Is it accident? Is it because of the similarity in the geographical isolation of the two countries? Or, is there a definite way in which all dramas have to develop in natural sequence?

## 2. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

The history of Burmese drama can be divided into six stages. First, there is the age of the *Nibhatkhin*, comparable to the English miracle play, ending about 1752. Second, we have, from 1752 to 1819, the period of the interlude<sup>1</sup> (comparable to the English morality and interlude) and the court drama. Third, we have the period of the dramatist, U Kyin U, 1819 to 1853. Fourth, we have the period of the poet, U Pon Nya, 1853 to 1878. Fifth, there is the period of decadence, 1878 to 1886. Sixth, we have the time from 1886 to the present day. As dates are in many cases uncertain in determining the periods I am taking the reigns of various kings. As the drama depended much on the court and the victories and defeats of the king, perhaps I am justified in so doing. In any case, if a date is wrong, it is wrong by not more than two or three years.

The time before 1752 is the most difficult period as far as research is concerned. The centuries that followed the fall of Pagan—the time of internal wars, 1287 to 1531—saw the rise of a vernacular literature, which is found existing in the Empire of 1531 to 1752.<sup>2</sup>

arranges its extracts in more or less chronological order, and therefore gives a good idea of the development. The subject is outside the scope of this work but I mention it to show how late the first appearance of Burmese drama was as compared with other branches of Burmese literature.

<sup>1</sup> The term 'interlude' is explained in chap. i.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps it will not be out of place to give a short summary of the history. The various small States into which the country broke up after 1287 gave place, after some fifty years of incessant strife, to Ava, the kingdom of the Burmese, and Pegu, that of the Taluings. The small principality of Toungoo under Ava rebelled and conquered the whole of Burma in 1531.

The rise of the *Nibhatkhin* was the result of the rise of the vernacular literature, for then learning had reached the people. But we do not quite know at what time the *Nibhatkhin* first came into being. According to tradition, the custom of holding religious processions and pageants had existed long before 1752, about which time the interlude and the *Hawsa* (a recitation of a story in verse) came into being, but how long before nobody can tell. However, as it must have taken some time for the vernacular literature to take root, I adopt tentatively 1531 to 1752 as the period of the *Nibhatkhin*.

For the story of the development of the *Nibhatkhin*, I am dependent on tradition alone. The tradition of its development from the pageant is quite logical. Moreover, it is general and not confined to a particular district. I have discussed it with various Burmese scholars and I have made inquiries in far-away villages, and always I find the same tradition. In some out-of-the-way villages, which the influences that affected the drama at the capital had failed to reach, the development of the *Nibhatkhin* from the pageant was within living memory. Until recently, in such villages, one could even see the *Nibhatkhin* in its various stages of development. One village would be presenting a procession, another a pageant, a third would be staging a fully developed *Nibhatkhin*; in all the villages, their particular practice had been the custom for many years, further development having been checked by the introduction of the drama in its more mature stages by touring troupes of professional actors, and it had continued to exist side by side with the performances of strolling players, just as some miracle plays continued to be presented in certain places in England during the heyday of the Elizabethan



drama. In 1916 I saw a *Nibhatkhin* at the obscure town of Pauk. For this period, I am greatly indebted to the notes made by my father. They are the results of inquiries and researches spread over a period of forty or fifty years. I realize that to many European scholars the section on the *Nibhatkhin* must appear conjectural in its dependence on tradition. My plea is that at present there is nothing else to depend on.<sup>1</sup>

With regard to the interlude, I am on surer ground. Again I depend much on tradition, but it is now tradition supported by evidence. Besides the general and common tradition, there is the tradition of the spirit mediums and actors, and, as I shall explain, the tradition of my own family.

Professional tradition of the mediums and actors is more reliable than common tradition because the two professions, especially the former, are closed fraternities, and as written records were never in use, they handed down the facts regarding the nature and history of their callings by word of mouth. To them oral tradition was as strong as written records. Moreover, their oral tradition can be checked by the stage conventions which exist at the present day. The various stage conventions are considered in Chapter VII.

The tradition in my family<sup>2</sup> begins from about the year 1800. About that time, an officer<sup>3</sup> in the victorious army of King Bodawpaya

<sup>1</sup> Even Harvey, who wrote his *History of Burma* at Exeter College, Oxford, often accepts oral tradition supported by no other evidence as substantially correct (*History of Burma*, pp. 33, 41, 211, 252, 267, 299). In two instances, pp. 33 and 41, the tradition cited dates back to the eleventh century A.D.

<sup>2</sup> My father is U Pein, District Magistrate, Burma Commission, now retired. In Burma, historical researches and inquiries are often made by administrative officials, as their duties carry them all over the country and to the remotest villages. Messrs Harvey, Stewart, Furnivall—great names in the Burma Research Society—are all officials belonging to the Burma Commission.

<sup>3</sup> He was Maha Minhla Mindin Raza.

I have to cite in this section the full names and official positions of some members of my family because:

1. As the Burmese use no surnames, my name alone would not convey anything regarding their identity.

2. The service record of the family may perhaps be construed as evidence in favour of the reliability of its tradition. G. E. Harvey, op. cit., p. 310 where he rejects Fuhrer's statement regarding an inscription because the 'precious slab has never been produced, and in view of Fuhrer's service record its production is essential.'

was appointed viceroy of the Seven Hill Districts of Mindon, situated between Arakan and the river Irrawaddy. It was during the Age of Triumph, the period when the native interlude and the Siamese-influenced court drama were being fused. At the miniature court of the viceroy were presented interludes and court plays, and *Hawsas* were publicly recited. In his palace,<sup>1</sup> a special apartment was built for the regular performance of plays and interludes, a special troupe of actors was taken under his patronage, and more famous troupes were often invited from the capital. In 1824 the unfortunate viceroy failed to stem the advance of the British forces, and he was executed and his palace burnt by royal order. From 1825 to 1852, the date of the second Anglo-Burmese war, Mindon was administered directly from the capital, and times were difficult; therefore dramatic performances at Mindon were few and far between. Though the son of the late viceroy was living, he wisely chose to leave the court, the administration of justice and politics alone, and as a result, he had neither the influence nor the wealth to patronize the drama. Therefore, as far as the drama was concerned, a gap resulted in the tradition of the family. In 1852 the British annexed the whole of Lower Burma, and Mindon passed into British hands. The viceroy's grandson was appointed chief administrative officer. This officer, my great-grandfather, took his office to be exactly similar in rank to that of his grand-sire, and though the British Government did not know of it—or the authorities at Rangoon did not care—he restored in effect the court of his grandfather, and dramatic performances were revived.<sup>2</sup> To him I am indebted for preserving much of the custom and tradition of the executed ancestor. To his revival of official performances of plays and interludes, I owe my information gathered from members of my family and the townspeople of Mindon. While the court poet, U Pon Nya, was further developing the drama, continuing the work of U Kyin U at the Burmese capital of Mandalay, in the out-of-the-way town of Mindon the interludes were still being performed. But it must not be supposed that Mindon was the only place where the interlude lived on. It survived in many places alongside the plays of the two great dramatists. But only from Mindon have I been able to obtain first-hand information and

<sup>1</sup> Though it was termed the 'palace', it was by no means a stately mansion or an imposing castle. Except for its gilded spires, emblems of the king's authority, it was just a big house of timber and bamboo with thatched roofs.

<sup>2</sup> He was U Sauk, Extra Assistant Commissioner.

accounts regarding it. Apart from the notes gathered by my father, I base my information on the accounts given to me orally by my grandmother and grand-aunts who actually saw the interludes performed.

In support of the oral tradition regarding the nature of the interlude, there are some echoes of it in the plays of U Kyin U. He developed the interlude into a proper play, but the change was not a sudden one, and in his plays we find echoes of the interlude in its various stages. His plays are considered in detail in another chapter. There are also contemporary references to the interlude. Even from an English pen we have an account. Colonel Yule in 1855 saw an entertainment midway between the interlude and the developed plays of U Kyin U.<sup>1</sup>

The period of the court plays offers an easier task for research. The *Rama* play from Siam is preserved, with adaptations, it is true, but with notes on the original when a change was made in the preserved version.<sup>2</sup> The other Siamese play of *Eenaung* has come down to us. The poem *Rama-yagan* which Burmanized the *Rama* story has also come down. Accounts of the performances of the court plays and the recitation of the poem at court are many and well known. From the time when they were first composed down to the present day, the works of these court poets and dramatists have been studied and read. The influence of these works on the interlude is suggested, not only by the 'internal evidence' in U Kyin U's plays, but also by the editorial prefaces to the works in their various editions.

Though only three plays of U Kyin U exist at the present day as far as is known, the period is quite easy of research, because references and notes regarding him occur in various records of the court and the nobility, and because the Burma Research Society has published new editions of two of his plays; and though the prefaces to them are short and no attempt is made to make a complete study, suggestions for further study and research are made by the editors.

The period of U Pon Nya offers the easiest task, as compared with other periods, so far as research is concerned. All his plays are

<sup>1</sup> H. Yule, *A Narrative of the Mission sent by the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in 1855*. His description of the dramatic entertainment he saw is considered again in the next chapter in connexion with Sir William Ridgeway's theory of the development of the Burmese drama.

<sup>2</sup> There is a copy of the *Rama* play in the British Museum. It is wrongly catalogued as by U Ku, who was only the editor. All these plays and the poem have been printed again and again, and are easily obtainable in Burma.

preserved in their entirety except the *Waythandaya*, and even that is extant with only two scenes missing, while respecting the lost scenes themselves some accounts are preserved. His works have been also studied widely and editorial prefaces to his works offer adequate accounts of his life and writings. Moreover, many courtiers of U Pon Nya's time are still living, and from them first-hand accounts have been obtained by scholars of the present day. After all, U Pon Nya's period is very recent.<sup>1</sup>

For the decadent period, 1878 to 1886, I was dependent on oral accounts of the plays until I went to England. Printing came into general use in Burma during this period and very great numbers of plays were printed. From the Government register of published books we learn that as many as three or four editions of 5,000 copies each of the more famous plays of the period were sold out a few weeks after publication. Yet search as I might, I could not find any copies of the plays in Burma. I discovered later that every one of the more famous plays, with about a hundred less-known plays of the period, are happily preserved in the British Museum. Incidentally, I found that the oral accounts regarding them were correct.

References to historical events and to non-dramatic works made in the thesis are taken from standard works.

As regards my dependence on oral tradition, there is this to be said. The oral accounts of a less civilized nation may be more imaginative than accurate, but with the Burmese everything points to the reliability of the tradition. After all, it goes back to only about two hundred years, and the intervening period is not so long as to undermine human memory. Moreover, as I have said, the truth of the tradition can be ascertained from other sources. It should be remembered that in a country where printing was not in general use until about 1860, and records and literary works were written on palm-leaf and parchment, both of which are very liable to destruction by

<sup>1</sup> My chief informants for the period are:

1. Myothawundauk-kadaw, wife of the Myothawundauk, who distinguished himself in the defence of the palace during the Myingun Rebellion mentioned in the chapter on U Pon Nya. She was a lady-in-waiting at court during the last two reigns.

2. My mother's elder brother. My maternal grandfather was Naymyo Thiri Kyawhtin Nawahta, Minister for Revenue at Minhla, and an 'honorary poet to the court' in the last two reigns.

fire, damp, or during a war, it is natural that original documents and records should not exist in great number. As this is the first attempt to study Burmese drama as a whole and from a modern critical standpoint, I am on virgin soil. My hope is that better scholars will consider critically the results which I have reached in necessary dependence upon tradition, and that when all has been reconsidered and much has been rejected, the residue may be accepted as a contribution to knowledge.

# CHAPTER I

## THE ORIGINS OF BURMESE DRAMA

### 1. BURMESE MUSIC AND DANCING

I HAVE said that no Burmese drama is to be found before the eighteenth century. The origins of that drama are to be found in the remote past of Burma's own national development, rather than in foreign importations or influence.

No doubt, Burmese music and dancing arose out of primitive religious rituals as in other countries. Society developed, civilization expanded, and contact with the Hindus and Chinese gave new ideas, but the native element always dominated, and the music and dancing remained, as indeed they still remain, essentially Burmese. In A.D. 800 when the Hindu expansion overseas was an accomplished fact, when the Hindu and Chinese civilizations had come into contact with each other, and when the rest of Indo-China had been drawn into the influence of those civilizations, Burmese music and dancing remained independent. In 800-2, when some parts of Upper Burma were under the nominal suzerainty of Nanchao (then a semi-independent State, now Yunnan), two Burmese deputations accompanied Nanchao missions to the Court of the Chinese Emperor, and the Burmese 'sang songs containing Sanskrit words and went through spelling dances, lining up in a pattern which read "Nanchao sends holy music!"'<sup>1</sup> The Imperial Secretary has left us a poem describing the occasion. The following is an extract:

Music from the land of P'iao, music from the land of P'iao,<sup>2</sup>  
Brought hither from the great ocean's south-west corner  
Yung Ch'iang's son, Shunant'o.  
Has come with an offering of southern tunes to fête the New Year.  
Our Emperor has taken his seat in the courtyard of the palace.  
He does not press his cap strings to his ears, he is listening to you!

<sup>1</sup> G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma*, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> The land of P'iao was the name by which Burma was known to the Chinese until the tenth century (*ibid.*, p. 11).

At the first blast of the jewelled shell, their matted locks grow  
crisp.

At one blow from their copper gong their painted limbs leap.

Pearl streams glitter as they twist, as though the stars were shaken  
in the sky

Flowery crowns nod and whirl, with the motion of dragon or  
snake.<sup>1</sup>

The music and the dance were strange enough and pleasing enough for the Emperor to bestow minor honorary offices at the court on the leaders of the deputation. Burmese music and dancing continued to develop, and at least the music reached great artistic heights in the kingdom of Pagan, for the kings were its patrons; Alaungsithu, king from 1112 to 1167, was himself an accomplished musician, and introduced new notes and tunes. With all its developments, the music remained so national that when the great Anawrahta (1044-77) led a raiding expedition into Bengal and wanted to leave a sign that he had been there, he set up, not stone pillars as was the practice of most eastern kings of the period, but stone images of Burmese musicians. And when Alaungsithu, his grandson, later raided Bengal, he found them; and men say that the stone musicians played tunes as if they were alive, to the great delight of the homesick king.<sup>2</sup>

Music and dancing could develop on their own without being overwhelmed by an already developed drama, as the Burmese did not know of the great Indian epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, or the Sanskrit drama and its kinsman the puppet show, although Java and the rest of Indo-China, through their Hindu colonists and kings, had definitely adopted the Indian epics and the drama as their own by about the sixth or seventh century. This absence of Hindu influence on Burmese music and dancing explains why the Burmese are the only civilized nation in the Far East who do not possess the fighting dance—the dance essentially connected with the great Indian epics.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The extract is taken from G. E. Harvey, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> Harvey, pp. 30 and 48; Tin and Luce, *The Glass Palace Chronicle*, p. 114. Alaungsithu was a great warrior and traveller.

<sup>3</sup> A fuller account of the Sanskrit drama and the epics is given in chap. ii.

## 2. FOLK FEASTS AND SPIRIT DANCES

According to legend, the Sanskrit drama was created in the Silver Age to cheer up the people, who were no longer happy as they were in the Golden Age; the Japanese drama was first used by the gods to beguile the sun-goddess to reappear; and the Chinese drama came into being as the result of the Emperor Yuen Tsaung ordering, in the eighth century after Christ, a group of children to be trained to sing the various deeds of the great national heroes before his consort, in appreciation of her love for him.<sup>1</sup> The Burmese, however, have no such legends, and the origins of their drama were in the religious *Nibhatkhin*. But before considering those Burmese miracle plays, perhaps it will not be out of place to give an account of the various folk feasts and spirit dances, which have in them elements essentially dramatic, and which gave some idea of the dramatic to the people and paved a way for the coming of the religious pageants and plays.

Folk feasts can be divided into two classes, those directly connected with Buddhism and those which are not. The Buddhist feasts occur on fixed dates and are celebrated all over the country. Of those, two are especially interesting, the feast of the Full Moon of the month of Tazaungmôn (which occurs in November) and the feast of the New Year (in April). Though the Full Moon of Tazaungmôn is an important Buddhist festival now, it is extremely probable that it was an important feast-day even before the introduction of Buddhism.<sup>2</sup> Special celebrations connected with the date have two distinct elements, the element of mimicry and the element of foolery. On that day, in the villages men dress themselves as animals, wearing appropriate masks, and dance through the village. The animal most commonly imitated is a sort of unicorn known to myth only. The desire to mimic animals probably came before the desire to mimic spirits, and I think the mimicry of animals, such as that we see in these celebrations, was the earliest attempt at the dramatic by the Burmese. Probably the mimicry of animals by men resulted in the presentation of animal puppet shows. In a Burmese puppet show, before the play begins, different animals come out one by

<sup>1</sup> A. B. Keith, *The Sanskrit Drama*; F. A. Lombard, *Japanese Drama*; A. E. Zucker, *Chinese Theatre*.

<sup>2</sup> Some Buddhist festivals in Burma probably are of pre-Buddhist origins (cf. the English Christmas which has many elements derived from pre-Christian times). At least the special celebrations of Tazaungmôn described here are almost certainly pre-Buddhist.



one, and each gives a special dance of its own.<sup>1</sup> At night, as part of the celebrations, there is a feast of fools. Young men and boys roam the village, throwing *zibyu* fruits at houses and stealing things, which will be found in the centre of the village the next morning: the objects of the good-natured theft are mostly articles that would provoke laughter—such as a lady's under-skirt; or those which would cause temporary inconvenience in the morning—such as cooking utensils, steps from stairs, or a piece from the roof. The Feast of the New Year is one of mirth and foolery. It is known as the Water Festival because on that occasion, every Burman takes a delight in throwing water at his neighbour and getting soaked himself as the result of the other's counter-attack. The men derive great enjoyment from drenching the women, who in their turn are not slow to have their revenge. Young men group themselves and dance joyously along the streets, at times being chased by bands of elderly maiden ladies who lie in wait to catch the ringleaders. When caught, the youths are lightly bound with silken cords and their faces are blackened with soot. Then they are made to perform a monkey dance before being granted their release. The spirit of fun apparent in these Burmese feasts of foolery is akin to that which moved the young clerks of the *Parlement* of Paris and the members of the Inns of Court in London to stage their Feasts of Fools in medieval times.<sup>2</sup>

As the villagers lead a communal life and every joy and sorrow of a villager is shared by all others, a joyful event is celebrated by a public feast. Marriage, birth, the admission of a son to his novitiate (for every Burmese boy enters priesthood for at least a week), and the piercing of the ear of a daughter are occasions for mirth and jollity. At these feasts they sing and dance and mimic, groups of villagers vie with each other for new methods of giving entertainment, and there is keen rivalry between youths and maidens. The most mirthful feast of all is the Harvest Feast in February, when the paddy has been reaped, and the village is ready to enjoy a well-earned rest of four after a working period of eight months.

These folk feasts are of great antiquity, though, because of the essentially unchanging life in the villages, they continue to exist even at the present day. The Tazaungmôn and other Buddhist feasts

<sup>1</sup> The puppet show is described in a later chapter.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. E. K. Chambers, *The Medieval Stage*, chap. xiii, 'The Feast of Fools'; also E. Welsford, *The Court Masque*, p. 2.

have been celebrated year after year, at least since the reintroduction of Buddhism in 1056, and at least since March, 638, when an early king of Pagan, Popsa Sawrahan (613-40), drew up the present Burmese era, the dawn of every Burmese new year has been the occasion for mirthful water-throwing.<sup>1</sup>

Buddhism had been introduced into the country through commercial relations with India long before the foundation of the kingdom of Pagan, but from the beginning it was only at second-hand and therefore feeble. The real religion of the Burmese before the re-introduction of Buddhism in 1056 was animistic, and they worshipped various spirits, known as *nats*. There were mediums, mostly women, who danced to please the spirits, and as the spirits were supposed to enter into the bodies of the mediums, sometimes it was believed that the spirits, and not the mediums, were actually dancing. Sometimes the medium herself actually believed that a spirit had taken control of her body, but usually she only pretended that a spirit had entered her, and gave an exhibition of acting. As the medium of each particular *nat* dressed herself in appropriate clothes, the spirit dances were essentially dramatic.<sup>2</sup> When Buddhism, in one of its purest forms, was introduced under Anawrahta, the great king realized the impossibility of attracting people suddenly to the new faith; so he compromised by recognizing the *nats* as Buddhist spirits and giving them shrines in his Shwezigôn Pagoda as its guardian spirits. When asked the reason, Anawrahta replied: 'Men will not come suddenly to the new faith. Let them come for their old gods, and they will gradually be won over.'<sup>3</sup>

So the worship of the *nats* lived on, and with the advance of

<sup>1</sup> Shway-Yoe (Sir George Scott) in *The Burman: His Life and Notions*, and Fielding Hall in *The Soul of a People* give detailed accounts of the feasts and life in the villages. However, as far as I have been able to find out, the Tazaungmôn celebrations have never been described in any English work.

<sup>2</sup> These dances are still performed on spirit-feast days at Taungbyôn (near Mandalay), a small town given up to spirit worship since the days of Pagan's greatness and perhaps even before.

The belief in, as distinct from the worship of, spirits is not alien to Buddhism.

The chief works on the subject are: Sir R. C. Temple, *The Thirty-Seven Nats*; Grant Brown, 'The Taungbyon Festival' in *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, 1915; the same author's 'The Pre-Buddhist Religion of the Burmese' in *Folk-Lore*, 1921; and G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma*.

<sup>3</sup> G. E. Harvey, *op. cit.*, p. 33.

civilization the spirit dances became elaborate, for though the belief was primitive, the people were no longer so. The dances benefited from the developments that had taken place in Burmese music which, as we have seen, flourished under the patronage of the Pagan kings. New spirits were added, and they were usually those of heroic princes. The dancers were now many, for the mediums turned themselves into dancing and music mistresses. The chief medium of each spirit dressed herself in the special dress of the spirit, but the junior mediums, who were equivalent to the chorus of an English revue, were in the dress of Burmese princesses. It is interesting to note the origin of this dress. The mediums realized the necessity of dressing themselves in fine raiment, but as everybody wore clothes of bright colours, the only solution of the problem was to don the dress of the court and official class, which the commoners were forbidden to wear by law, except during feasts and dances. When drama proper came into being, the hero and the heroine dressed themselves in the court dress, even when they were representing common characters.

### 3. MIRACLES AND INTERLUDES

After the fall of the kingdom of Pagan in A.D. 1257, Burma was the scene of fierce civil wars, but the trouble was mainly in the capitals; in the villages and small towns life went on in its joyous way. Religion continued to spread in spite of the fact that the throne of Pagan was no longer in existence to support it. Learning began to reach the remotest parts of the country, carried far and near by monks. To escape from the aimless strife of the civil wars, men turned towards literature. Money was lacking to compose poems in brick as had been done at Pagan, and men now expressed their love for the religion and their love for the beautiful in writing. The new literature further educated the people and made even stronger the already strong religious fervour. As a result, at village feasts and on days of public rejoicing, the people turned towards their religion for amusement and entertainment. So pageants depicting scenes from the life of the Buddha and from his Birth Stories came into being.

Pageants were given on ordinary carts that were in use for all kinds of transport and which are still in use in backward parts of the country at the present day. Each cart carried a group of (amateur) actors standing still and representing a set scene. Originally, no doubt, there were only a few carts representing scenes from different stories. Later, a pageant came to consist of many carts and many

scenes. Still later, the scenes came to be taken from one story only, so that a whole story was given by the pageant. Dresses became quite gorgeous and the scheme elaborate. The pageant now needed organization. Therefore, the village came to be divided into two parts, eastern and western quarters or northern and southern quarters (the village was usually greater in length than breadth, being built along a main road). In larger villages and towns, the division was into four quarters. Each quarter was responsible for the production of a pageant. There was intense rivalry between the quarters to produce the finest pageant; it was usually friendly, but often enmity arose, and many pageants were occasions for free fights. The rivalry further developed the pageant, for new ideas would be introduced by one quarter to outrival the others. Soon the pageant became a play, its scenes coming to life.

The *Nibhatkhin* was the Burmese equivalent of the English miracle and mystery plays. It was the pageant come to life. With the pageant, the religious processions went along the main streets without stopping, each cart representing a set scene. But with the *Nibhatkhin*, each cart stopped at certain places. The most common of such places were the market-place, the house of the chief administrative officer, and the pagoda where the procession ended. At each of those places, each cart stopped, and the scene came to life. Dialogue and action were used. Therefore, people at the stopping places saw what was in effect a play.

The *Nibhatkhin* was extremely popular, and it lived on until recently, just as many of the English miracle plays continued to be produced right through the Elizabethan period. I saw one in the out-of-the-way town of Pauk as recently as 1916. However, I do not think that *Nibhatkhins* are produced anywhere nowadays. Sometimes one sees a procession on cars and motor lorries as a sort of reminiscence of the *Nibhatkhin*. But such processions are mere shows and lack the essential features of the Burmese miracle plays.

It was for the entertainment of the populace that the *Nibhatkhin* came into being, and as the Burmese entertainment connotes laughter, soon the element of humour came into the *Nibhatkhin*. At first none of the characters was made humorous, for they all came out of religious stories. And so the clown was introduced. The clown or *Lu-byet* ('the non-serious man') was put into the *Nibhatkhin* as an extra character, an attendant on the prince-hero. He was extremely popular, and soon another clown, an attendant on the princess-heroine,

was introduced. The clowns were usually males, though later a female clown-attendant of the princess occasionally appeared. The clown was so popular that he continued to appear as an extra character even when the plays of the great dramatists came to be produced later. He was essentially outside the play. He made up his own part, he invented his own dialogue, and made up his jokes as the play moved along. However, even with the *Nibhatkhin*, he was not allowed to interfere with the movement of the play and its story. He played and joked at the beginning of the first scene when the actual story had not begun, he gave sometimes an outline of the story and its sources, and he gave information regarding the production of the procession and the play. He was the most privileged person among the actors, for he alone could without offence laugh at, and satirize, all things and all persons.

However, the clown was essentially unconnected with the actual story, and soon the actual characters came to be burlesqued. As the devil in the English miracle plays, the villain of the *Nibhatkhin* (in the Birth Stories, the villain was a previous incarnation of Devadat who repeatedly tried to harm the Buddha) became a humorous and popular character. The Burmese love of humour and gentle satire would have turned the whole *Nibhatkhin* into pure farce had not a convention arisen with regard to the presentation of religious characters. The Buddha was never to be represented on the stage. Stories about him up to the time he actually attained Buddhahood could be presented, but no one should impersonate him when he had become the Buddha. It was soon followed by another convention that the character of an *arahat* (saint) should not be presented unless it was absolutely necessary, and then only when the part was to be taken by an able and 'serious' actor, who must be actually keeping a fast on the day and night the *Nibhatkhin* was being presented. As a person keeping a fast has to behave in a dignified manner, that convention prevented the part from being turned into a humorous one.

With all these developments, people did not forget that the *Nibhatkhin* was essentially a religious show presented in connexion with religious festivals, and therefore further development was impossible. The conservatism of the village, the dislike of the amateur actors to be in any way profane or thought to be so, the restricted scope of the stories and the characters, all prevented any further development of the religious drama as such.

However, the Burmese equivalent of the English interlude came into being all the same. It developed out of the equivalent of the English miracle play, but indirectly. The chance of developing the drama was seized by professional actors. To break away from the tradition and the conservatism, persons outside the pale of 'good' society were needed. Spirit dancers were such persons. They worshipped the *nats*<sup>1</sup> and most people looked upon them with fear as being in touch with sinister and unnatural forces. They were outside the religion, and their drunken dances—drunken from wine and ecstasy—were outside the popular conception of moral behaviour. Therefore the new professional actors were drawn from the ranks of the spirit mediums. However, those who took to the new profession were malcontents and failures in their original profession. The increase in the number of the spirit dancers had caused the mediums to form themselves into a fraternity, the entry to which was closely guarded. The economic attractions of spirit dancing tempted people who had no faith in the spirits to become mediums. These factors caused discontent and disunion among the mediums, and within and without the fraternity pseudo-mediums came into being. The advance of education had robbed the *nats* of many worshippers, but most people continued to patronize spirit dancing for mere love of music and dancing. The result was the rise of a class of professional entertainers who danced and sang and played on musical instruments. The new dancers pretended to be mediums and semi-mediums, but their dancing was unconnected with any spirit feast. The rise of this professional dancing was doubtless gradual and must have preceded the *Nibhatkhin*. As early as about the year 1400, two princes and their attendants, when turned out of their palace, earned their living as wandering minstrels and professional dancers, pretending to be spirit worshippers.<sup>2</sup> Because of the very fact that the new dancers were malcontents and failures in their original

<sup>1</sup> The objects of the spirit worship are the thirty-seven *nats*, all of whom are more or less of evil character; but there are in addition to these many good *nats* who have little to do with human affairs.

<sup>2</sup> One prince became King Minkaung (1401-22), the other, his brother, helping him to gain the throne. An attendant became King Mohnyinthadot (1427-40), and the others ministers (G. E. Harvey, *op. cit.*, p. 96).

The new dancers were mostly men. Men mediums were secondary to women mediums, and perhaps that was one of the reasons for the discontent among the mediums, and also the reason why the men took to wandering all over the country as dancers.

profession of mediums, they could break away also from the tradition and conservatism of the spirit worshippers. They were outside the religion and outside the spirit worship. They were fettered by nothing. They were the only persons who could develop new ideas with regard to the *Nibhatkhin*. And they were the first to realize the possibilities of the new entertainment. Soon they had developed it into the Burmese equivalent of the English interlude.

The professional dancers became actors. People were no longer satisfied with mere dancing and singing, for the *Nibhatkhin* had given them some taste of the dramatic scene. Therefore the dancers in the middle of their entertainment paused and gave a little scene, or rather a one-act play. The male dancer became the hero, the female dancer the heroine, and the other two or three dancers became minor characters. The clown had been long before borrowed from the *Nibhatkhin*, and he became a mimic-dancer attending on the others. For two reasons the scene was always the forest. First, it did not need much stage scenery, as the branch of a tree would be enough to indicate that the action was supposed to be taking place in a forest. Second, the journey through a forest by the hero and heroine made it possible for human beings and fairies, demons and gods, princes and commoners to meet and take part in various adventures and mis-adventures. Thus the Burmese interlude came into being.

Perhaps it is not illogical to wonder whether there was an intermediary stage of development, whether there were plays comparable to the English morality plays, bridging the gap between the *Nibhatkhin* on the one hand and the Burmese interlude on the other. It is of course impossible to be certain with regard to the question, for no Burmese miracle play or interlude has come down to us in writing. I have said<sup>1</sup> that there are oral accounts regarding the *Nibhatkhin* and that entertainment which I have termed the interlude, and also written accounts regarding the latter. But there is absolutely no mention in those accounts of anything which could be termed the Burmese morality play. Yet, I venture to think that there must have been plays comparable to the English moralities. If it should be presumed that the interlude developed directly out of the *Nibhatkhin*, there would be a big gap between the two. I think that the professional actors first gave semi-religious plays in imitation of the *Nibhatkhin*. I think also that there were also plays actually dealing with abstract notions of morality and religion which formed the

<sup>1</sup> Introduction, pp. 7-10.

subject of the English morality plays. Again and again we find writers writing and actors saying in the prologue or epilogue that a play represents but life in its various stages; as man begins in laughter and ends in misery and death, a play begins with the happiness of the hero and heroine, and then goes on to tell of their misery and parting. To the conservative Burmese Buddhist, professional acting was a sin, and to get over the difficulty, the idea came into being that the play was only a species of preaching the religion. The existence of that idea perhaps supports my theory that there actually were plays dealing with morals which would favour the rise of such an idea. Perhaps the strongest evidence that there was a morality stage in the history of the development of Burmese drama is the existence of a popular play which has never been printed, but which is still sometimes acted. The play has no title. A rich miser marries a young wife and soon dies. The wife at once remarries. The miser now in Hell sues the wife and the new husband before the court of the governor of Hell, for the restitution of the property he had so patiently gathered and hoarded. There is a trial, and after hearing the arguments of both sides, the judge decides in favour of the young couple. The play ends with the judge moralizing on the emptiness and transitory nature of human riches. The play is quite crude and short, so that when presented today the actors have to lengthen the play to make it last the night. There is very little action, and the king of later dramas is absent. The names of the characters are general and abstract; Mister Miserly, Mistress Wife, Master New Husband, and Death (who takes the old husband to Hell).

The interlude was extremely popular, and at the court, at the houses of officials (the Burmese had no hereditary nobility, and the officials were the nobles) and at public feasts and festivals the interlude was presented. The importance of the interlude in the development of Burmese drama is great, but the importance of the professional actors who first presented the interlude in the development of the acting profession and stage conventions is even greater. The fact that the original members of the profession were outside the social pale caused all actors and actresses to be looked down upon; that fact explains why in an essentially democratic society it was said with contempt that 'beggars and actors, they are the eaters of food thrown away as waste'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The stage conventions and the acting profession are described in detail in chap. vii.



While the interlude was developing, the drama, another form of entertainment, was also becoming rapidly popular. The *Hawsa* or the dramatic reading and recital of a Birth Story in verse was becoming the fashion. The *Hawsa* was in dialogue form, and the reciter changed his voice and used dramatic gestures. As I have said, one cannot be certain of many things regarding the interlude, but it seems exceedingly probable that the early interludes were not literary. The actors were unlettered, unpractised in verse composition and only knew the *Jataka* Birth Stories from translations. The *Hawsa*, on the other hand, was a literary work. It was in verse. The reciter was an accomplished verse-writer if not a poet, and when reciting pieces he himself had not written, he invariably put in additions and modifications. He knew Pali and therefore could read the *Jatakas* in the original. Whilst the actor was looked upon as nothing more than a beggar, the reciter was greatly respected. This will perhaps explain why the *Hawsa*, and not the interlude, has come down to us in writing.<sup>1</sup> With all the differences, however, the reciter and the actor were akin to each other, and both contributed much to the rise of the developed play, just as both the dramatic recitations of the epic *Ramayana*, and the open-air performances of its scenes contributed much to the rise of the developed Sanskrit play in India.

There is no special term for that entertainment which I have called the interlude. The name *Pya-zat*, which means a play, is vaguely applied to it in common with developed plays, but it is certain that the term came into use only about the time of U Kyin U to denote developed plays. Therefore, I have ventured to name it the interlude, partly because of its similarity to the English interlude, but mainly because it was given in the middle of, or at least subsidiary to, the main entertainment of dancing.

The interlude and the *Hawsa* were at the height of their popularity in 1767 when Siam was conquered. The results of the conquest are considered in Chapter II.

#### 4. SIR WILLIAM RIDGEWAY'S THEORY OF THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF BURMESE DRAMA

Sir William Ridgeway, in *The Dramas and Dramatic Dances of Non-European Races*, considers that the dramas and dramatic dances of those races support his theory regarding Greek tragedy, that it arose

<sup>1</sup> Some specimens of the *Hawsa* are given in the *Anthology of Burmese Literature*.

out of the worship of the dead. Most scholars are sceptical of that animistic theory of the origin of the drama. With regard to the Greek drama, Dr Farnell, in *The Cult of the Greek States*, seems to prove clearly that Ridgeway is wrong. Likewise with regard to Sanskrit drama, Dr Keith, in his book on the subject, rejects Ridgeway's theory; and he adds more generally: 'Whether elsewhere the worship of the dead resulted in drama is a matter open to grave doubt. Certainly in the case of the Greek drama, which offers the most interesting parallel to that of India, the evidence of derivation from the funeral games is wholly defective.'<sup>1</sup>

Ridgeway treats of Burmese drama in detail. He knows it only from hearsay. He has never seen a play acted on the Burmese stage, nor has he read any in the original or translation. All his information is purely descriptive of the actual presentation of a play, not of the play itself. His informants knew no Burmese dramatic literature nor did they have any idea as to the history of the drama. Nevertheless, Ridgeway gives quite a good estimate of the nature of the drama. The fault lies chiefly with Mr Taw Sein Kho, on whose information Ridgeway mainly relies. The late Mr Taw Sein Kho was no doubt a great archæologist, but he was a poor student of Burmese literature, and he had absolutely no idea of the origins and development of Burmese drama. In his letter<sup>2</sup> to the Director-General of the Archæological Survey of India, who was in correspondence with him on the nature of Burmese drama at the request of Ridgeway, he wrote: 'The *Ramayana* in an adapted form is also acted. I am inclined to think that it was derived by the Burmans from the Cambodians, because the dresses and stage paraphernalia of the Burmans and Cambodians in acting the play are so strikingly similar.' As the Siamese *Ramayana* was influenced by, or came from the same sources as the Cambodian *Ramayana*, Mr Taw Sein Kho did good detective work. But his letter shows clearly that he was absolutely ignorant of the introduction of the Siamese *Ramayana* into Burma and its results. He seems to have known nothing about the great dramatists, U Kyin U and U Pon Nya, for Ridgeway does not mention them at all.

Ridgeway traces the development of Burmese drama in three main stages:

<sup>1</sup> A. B. Keith, *The Sanskrit Drama*.

<sup>2</sup> The letter is quoted in *The Dramas and Dramatic Dances of Non-European Races*.

1. The impersonation of the *nats* by mediums;
2. The true dramatic element borrowed from the Indian historical plays of Rama, presented by puppet players;
3. Drama based on the Indian models, but finding its themes in national history and mythology, intermixed with Buddhistic elements, and performed by puppets and living actors.

I proceed to deal with these three alleged stages.

1. There is no doubt that the impersonation of the *nats* by mediums had, and still has, the element of the dramatic, as I have described. However, it is unreasonable to hold that the impersonation in question was the origin of Burmese drama. Ridgeway puts forward three lines of argument with regard to his theory: (a) the worship of the dead and the ritual connected with it have resulted in true dramas in other countries: the impersonation of the *nats* by mediums is a ritual connected with the worship of the dead, and therefore, as in other countries, it has resulted in the rise of a drama; (b) the *nat* dances had, and still have, the dramatic element in them; (c) the derivation of true Burmese drama from the earliest stages of the drama, the *nat* dances, is proved by the fact that there is a tree in the centre of the 'stage' when a play is being presented. These lines of argument are unsound.

(a) Whether the worship of the dead results in drama in other countries is doubtful. We have seen that the view has been controverted as regards Greece and as regards India. Even if it were true of countries around Burma, for that country has a history and civilization distinctly national because of its geographical barriers.

(b) There is no doubt as to the existence of the dramatic element in the *nat* dances. But such an element also existed in the various folk feasts of the Burmese people. Ridgeway has no information regarding them. Though the spirit dances made some contribution to the rise of the drama, they were not mainly responsible, and it could not be said that the drama developed out of those dances. They gave to the country new dances and new dancers, and they developed dancing and music. But the true drama resulted only from the presentation of religious stories by amateurs. The *nat* dancers were essentially professional, and alien to the religious feeling and education that inspired the *Nibhatkhin*. It is true that those professionals later developed the drama, but they did so as professional actors and not as spirit mediums.

Before proceeding any further perhaps I ought to explain what I mean when I speak of the 'origins' of Burmese drama. A great deal of confusion can result through the vagueness of the term 'origins'. By it I mean that point where the drama has taken some definite shape as drama, and not merely as dramatic elements. If we were to consider as origins all prehistoric dramatic elements in the life and customs of the nation, it would lead us nowhere. The worship of the *nats* in some form or other must have been developed by the tribes that first settled in Burma. And as religious ritual leads to music and dancing among primitive people, the worship led to the development of Burmese music and dancing. But we cannot take music and dancing as the origins of drama. No doubt music and dancing are necessary for the rise of a drama, but speech is necessary too, and yet we cannot say that the first attempt of man to express himself was the real origin of drama. It is vital to distinguish mere dramatic elements from true drama. In this connexion, Dr Keith's treatment of the origins of Sanskrit drama is enlightening. Many had contended before him that the Sanskrit drama had its origins in Vedic ritual. Dr Keith, however, rejects the theory. He recognizes the dramatic elements in Vedic ritual, but he recognizes them as such and not as the origins of the drama. No doubt the dramatic elements in the ritual gave some idea of the dramatic to the Indian people, but the drama did not arise out of them. It arose only when the great Indian epics had spread all over the country, for the true origin of the drama was in the recitation of the epics. With regard to Burmese drama, although the elements of the dramatic existed in the worship of the spirits and in various folk customs and folk feasts, the origin of the true drama was in the religious pageants and the *Nibhatkhin*.

(c) Ridgeway puts forward the tree in the middle of the 'stage' as evidence of the fact that the drama developed out of the *nat* worship. He contends that the tree is a symbol of the *nat*, because *nats* live in trees. He quotes from Colonel Yule's account of his embassy to Burma where the latter described a Burmese play in progress. There was no actual stage in those days. The play was given in the centre of an open place or yard, and the space for the actors was marked off. In the centre of that space was a tree. The ambassador inquired as to the purpose of the tree, but he was given a 'somewhat vague answer' that it represented a forest. He was not satisfied and put forward the theory that there must have been some belief connected with the tree, for it was present on all the occasions on which he

witnessed Burmese plays.<sup>1</sup> Ridgeway approves of that theory. He maintains that the tree is symbolic of the worship of the *nats*. In an appendix to the book he quotes a letter from a resident in Burma (which arrived too late to be discussed in the book itself), describing some sort of a *nat* ritual where a spirit was supposed to be dwelling in a tree. However, *nats* are supposed to dwell, not only in trees, but also in houses, mountains, streams, lakes, on Mount Mayyu, in fact everywhere, and it is extremely unlikely that the tree should have been chosen specially to represent the abode of the *nat*. In all the ritual connected with the worship of the thirty-seven *nats*, the use of a tree does not occur except in the case of the *nat*, U-Yin-Gyi. When offerings are made to him, a wooden representation of a forked branch of a tree is used. But that symbol is used only when that particular spirit alone is being worshipped, i.e. when all the *nats* are being worshipped *en bloc* the symbol is not used. U-Yin-Gyi has no special connexion with the stage, and he is essentially connected with Lower Burma; and Upper Burma, not Lower, was the home of Burmese drama. And what Colonel Yule took to be a vague answer was the true answer. What he saw was an interlude and not a developed play, and, as has been stated, the scene of the interlude was almost always the forest, for it needed nothing except a tree to indicate the scene. Therefore, the tree which the ambassador saw was a piece of stage scenery and nothing more.

Though Ridgeway's theory that the drama had its origins in the worship of the *nats*, therefore, is not founded on fact, his contention that the Burmese professional actors are the lineal descendants of the mediums who impersonated the spirits of the dead is not wrong. But the fact that the actors are the descendants of such persons should not mislead us into thinking the drama to be a descendant of spirit worship. There is a great danger of being thus misled if one knows the various stage conventions without knowing the real history of the drama. And had Ridgeway been acquainted with those conventions, which (strangely enough) were not known to him and his informants, he might have been strengthened in his view. The most important of the stage conventions is the *nat* chorus which often acts as a 'curtain-raiser' to the actual play. The chorus composed of females comes out and sings and dances to various *nat*

<sup>1</sup> H. Yule, *A Narrative of the Mission sent by the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in 1855.*

tunes played by the orchestra. The chorus was first introduced for two reasons: the audience liked a dance, and the actors did not forget that their original calling was that of mediums.

2. According to Ridgeway, the second stage of the drama was reached when the 'true dramatic element borrowed from the Indian historical plays of Rama, presented by the puppet players' had entered Burmese drama. The weak points in this theory will be apparent when the further history of the drama is considered in later chapters. The 'true dramatic element' was already in the *Nibhatkhin*, or at least in the interlude; the Indian *Ramayana* coming by way of Siam did influence Burmese drama, but this was possible only because there was already a native drama to absorb this foreign influence. Nor were the *Rama* plays presented at first by puppet players. When the translations and adaptations of the Siamese *Ramayana* were being first presented at court, puppet plays were unknown. Ridgeway puts forward some opinions regarding the Burmese puppet show also, but they will be considered in Chapter VII.

3. According to Ridgeway, the third stage of Burmese drama was reached when there appeared plays 'based on the Indian models, but finding their themes in the national history and mythology, intermixed with Buddhistic elements, and performed by puppets and living actors.' It is true that after the introduction of the Siamese *Rama* play to the Burmese court, plays of the type described appeared, but the plays were by no means modelled on the *Rama* play. The Siamese play gave rise to a native court drama which influenced the interlude and prepared the way for the first great Burmese dramatist, U Kyin U. And the 'Buddhistic elements' which entered the drama have a history of their own. All these points are considered in later chapters.

On the nature and achievements of Burmese drama, Ridgeway says: 'The Burmese drama has not remained crystallized as a piece of religious ritual. On the contrary, it has made distinct steps towards the true drama which Thepis in Greece and the forerunners of Marlowe and Shakespeare in England detached from the sacred shrines and lifted into a distinct artistic form. Yet it has not advanced beyond the lyrical stage, consisting of dancing, singing and instruments of music, the undulation of the vocal expression being much more subtle and intense than the expression of features, whilst gesture is restricted to the conventional gestures of the dance. The usual scene is the palace, its inmates the characters, and the drama

adheres tenaciously to the tradition of royalty. Hero and heroine are prince and princess, their retinue courtiers, and the countrymen jester and clown; the king is idealized, his deputies travestied.' In short, the Burmese drama is narrow in range. These opinions of Ridgeway are true and just in many respects, but they have also their weakness. He errs in thinking that Burmese drama is still in the undeveloped lyrical stage. What he thinks to be an earlier stage is in reality a later one. Dancing and singing have dominated the Burmese *pwe* (the public presentation of a play) since the fall of the kingdom, but that stage was only reached after decadence had set in in the drama developed so well by U Kyin U and U Pon Nya. What Mr Taw Sein Kho described in his letter to the Director-General of the Archæological Survey, what most other informants of Ridgeway also saw, was Burmese drama in decadence and distortion. The scene of the drama is not always the palace, though the palace and its inmates appear almost always in Burmese plays. The forest, village, city and the common people often appear, though it is true that they are subordinated to the dramatic interest in the palace and its inmates. Burmese drama was forced to confine itself in general to the palace, as in a society where other class distinctions scarcely existed, the king and his courtiers alone were different from the rest: and, in general, a Burmese audience wanted characters somewhat different from those of common life. The same was true of the Elizabethan drama. Though the 'domestic' drama was popular, the best plays of the Elizabethans have their scenes in distant lands or in high society. Therefore the narrowness of its range does not necessarily make out Burmese drama to be in an early stage of growth. For the sake of completeness, I have described briefly these aspects of the drama, but they will be considered in detail in later chapters.

The opinions expressed by Sir William Ridgeway are full of error. The worth of the chapter on Burmese drama in his *Dramas and Dramatic Dances of Non-European Races* consists in this, that it was he who made the first attempt to study the development of Burmese drama scientifically, to compare it with the drama of other countries, and to form an estimate of it according to western standards of criticism. And, erroneous though his views are, it is much to his credit that with the scanty and often misleading information before him he could give such a shrewd estimate of Burmese drama.

## CHAPTER II

### THE RISE OF A COURT DRAMA IN BURMA

#### 1. THE *RAMAYANA* OF VALMIKI

BEFORE considering the influence of the Siamese *Rama* play on Burmese drama, perhaps it will not be out of place to attempt to give an account of the great Indian epic, the *Ramayana*, in which the Siamese play had its sources.

The *Ramayana* is one of the two Hindu epics, the other being the *Mahabharata*. The *Ramayana* as a completed poem is the older of the two, though the kernel of the *Mahabharata* may have been older. Very probably the legend of Rama existed long before Valmiki composed the poem, to which later poets made large additions; the original composition and the main additions belong to the period 400 B.C. The epic contains two separate stories, the court intrigues of Ayodhya and the exile of Rama to the forest; the capture of Sita by Ravana and the resulting war with the demon king. The first story was probably in existence as a Buddhist Birth Story—the *Dasaratha Jataka*—when the poem came into being.<sup>1</sup>

The poem is divided into seven books. The first book in its present shape, which reveals additions to the original, tells of the manner in which the poem came to be composed by Valmiki, of the Hindu gods, the divine origin of the prince Rama, and his winning of Sita as bride by bending a strong bow which none other could bend. In the second book we read that Rama was going to be consecrated heir, but the junior queen, Kaikeyi, the mother of Bharata, reminded the king that he had promised two boons to her for nursing him when he was lying ill. She demanded firstly the choice of her own son, Bharata, as heir, and secondly the exile of Rama. The doting king was in great distress and tried to argue with the queen, but it was in vain, and the promise had to be kept. Rama acquiesced, and

<sup>1</sup> Dr A. B. Keith has kindly pointed out to me that many scholars doubt whether the *Dasaratha Jataka* could be so old, and, therefore, the general opinion would seem to regard it as being later than the poem.



was ordered to the forest as an exile. His consort, Sita, and his brother, Lakshmana, begged to accompany him into exile. So the three left the city, followed by a wailing crowd who wanted to share the exile, but they succeeded in getting away from the people and reached the forest. The king died soon after of a broken heart, and Bharata followed Rama to the forest, refusing to take the throne as long as the rightful heir was living. Rama, however, had promised his father to live fourteen years in exile, and therefore he refused to take the throne. Bharata asked for a symbol with which to rule in his name, and Rama gave his shoes, which Bharata, on his return to the city, faithfully put on the throne, and he ruled in Rama's name. The third book deals with the two princes and the princess who entered a thicker part of the forest where demons dwelt. The demons were troubling the hermits who performed their austerities in the forest. Now the king of the demons, Ravana, had divine powers, which had been granted to him by Brahma, the chief god, for services rendered, but as he had been abusing the divine gift, Rama's chief mission was to destroy the demon king. It happened that the demon's sister, Surpanakha, fell in love with Rama. He refused her advances and suggested that she should approach Lakshmana, the younger brother, as he was unmarried. The demon princess then tried to attract the brother, but he suggested that she should ask Rama to take her as his second queen. The sole result of these efforts and her attack on Sita was the cutting-off of the demon princess's nose by the younger brother, who was impulsive by nature. The angry princess went back to her brother, the demon king who, however, was not eager to fight Rama and risk his life and throne. The sister succeeded in winning him over only when she mentioned the loveliness of Sita. The demon king sent his forces under the great warrior, Khara, who was worthy to be Rama's opponent. There was a great and bloody fight, from which Rama emerged victorious. The demon king's sister then thought of a plan to which the king agreed. The latter disguised himself as a hermit, and his follower, Maricha, assumed the form of a golden deer and passed by the place where Rama and his companions dwelt. Sita wanted the deer, and Rama was pressed to give chase to it. Rama left, charging his brother with the careful guardianship of Sita. The deer was shot, but as he lay dying he imitated Rama's voice and shouted: 'Lakshmana, help!' Sita heard the words and taunted Lakshmana until he went to his brother's help, full of evil forebodings. In his absence, the demon king approached the

place in the guise of a hermit, and the princess, not suspecting him, invited him to come in. The hermit began to praise her beauty, and then showed his true form. Sita refused his advances, but was put forcibly on the demon's flying chariot and driven away. The King of the Vultures, friend of Rama, gave chase, but after a fierce battle, he was slain by the demon. Rama and his brother soon discovered their loss and went in search of Sita. They met another demon, and there resulted another battle. The demon was slain, but his spirit advised Rama to seek the help of the monkey king, Sugriva. The fourth book tells how the two brothers met Sugriva, who informed them that he had been deprived of his throne by his brother, the usurping Bali, who had also taken his wife. Rama, as Sugriva's ally, joined in a battle for the throne in which the usurper was killed. The queen bewailed the death of her hero, but she soon took her first husband back again, without giving much thought to the memory of Bali. The fifth book tells us how Hanuman, the wise minister of Sugriva, went as a spy to the demon kingdom and succeeded in learning Sita's whereabouts. The sixth book tells of the great battle between Rama with his monkey allies and the demons. Their king was slain by Rama, and Sita was then restored to him. Rama, however, behaved in a heartless manner. He told her that her long captivity in the kingdom of the demon had made her impure; he had waged the war merely to vindicate his honour and not because he wanted her back. Now Sita had always refused the advances of the demon king, who had been afraid to win her by force. But Rama thought otherwise, and Sita was in sore distress. Her innocence and purity had never been in any way tarnished, and the fact was now proved by a divine miracle—her successful emergence from an ordeal by fire. So Rama was satisfied, and he returned with Sita to his own capital where they were crowned. The seventh book, very probably an addition, tells of the further adventures of Sita. Her innocence was doubted, notwithstanding the divine miracle, by most of her people, who believed her to have been the consort of the demon king. They blamed Rama for taking her back. As a result of this agitation, Sita was again exiled for some years. During her exile her twin sons were born. At last, again by divine miracle and help, her purity was proved to the satisfaction of the people. They made ready to welcome her back to her city, but she was received into the bosom of the earth goddess.

On this great national epic were founded many plays. For

example, the thirteen Trivandrum plays commonly attributed to the authorship of Bhasa contain two based on the *Ramayana*. The date of the plays is generally accepted as the second or third century after Christ.

## 2. THE SIAMESE COURT PLAY OF *RAMA*

From about the third century after Christ, the great Hindu expansion overseas began in earnest, and as a result many Hindu kingdoms were founded in Indo-China, Malaya, Java, and the surrounding regions. Before that time, very probably there was at least some intercourse between India and those regions, and may be Buddhism was not unknown in the regions mentioned. But by the third century A.D. Buddhism had completely disappeared in them, except for very faint traces remaining in Burma. In India itself, Buddhism was on the wane and Brahmanism was in the ascendant. Therefore when the merchants of Northern India spread a new culture in Indo-China and the surrounding regions, the culture was distinctly Hindu. The Indians took with them their religious epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Though both came to be very well known, the former was perhaps the more popular, probably because it was more finished artistically. Sanskrit plays were also no doubt introduced. The Hindu influence reached its height about the fourth and fifth centuries—in the third century Bhasa was composing his plays, and Kalidasa, the greatest of Hindu-Sanskrit dramatists lived about the year 400. Hindu poems and romances must also have been brought into the newly-founded kingdoms and trading centres.

The intensity of the new influence varied in the regions. Burma was nearest and directly on the route from India. But probably there was already a strong native civilization, and Hindu culture failed to take root. Along the coast, however, at Thaton, there was quite a strong outpost of Hindu culture, but even there the Hindu influence was quite negligible compared with regions farther east. In Cambodia the new culture was especially favoured, and in Java, Sumatra and the Malay peninsula, it took deep root. In Siam, however, the intensity was much less. In the narrow circle of the court the Hindu influence was strong, but the people were quite untouched by it. The chief reason was very probably the continuous, peaceful invasion by people from the north, the Shans, or at least the forefathers of the modern Shans. According to some scholars, they were Buddhists, which is not unlikely as Buddhism, in a modified form,

was prevailing in China and Tibet by about the third century A.D. In any case, the ever-increasing population, alien to Hindu culture, must have acted against the intensity of the Hindu influence. Moreover, Siam was one of the earliest converts from Hinduism to Buddhism which, especially after the great Buddhist missionary, Buddhagosa, who lived in the fifth century, was ousting Brahmanism in Indo-China. At the Siamese court, however, the Hindu tradition was very strong, and remained so even when the king and his courtiers had become Buddhists.

In Siam, as in the neighbouring regions, learning did not reach the people for a long time even though it flourished at the court. The Hindu tradition was not strong enough to prevent the courtiers from creating a native literature. Buddhism prevented the courtiers from looking upon the Hindu learning with a conservatism that would not have allowed imitations. In Cambodia and elsewhere native ideas could never shake off the dominance of Hindu culture, and no native literature could come into being until quite modern times. Moreover, the very fact that the Hindu tradition was strong prevented the survival of Sanskrit literature in those regions, for once the tradition was broken, only chaos resulted. To make it clear, I will take the Java shadow-play. Sanskrit dramatic representation gave rise to the Java shadow-play. Therefore, one would expect Java to preserve a Hindu dramatic literature to herself and to the world. But it failed to do so. The shadow-play of Java is interesting as a special kind of dramatic performance, and not as dramatic literature. The stories that are presented on the shadow-stage in Java are taken mostly from the Hindu epics, but they have very little dramatic structure. Yet originally they must have been developed Sanskrit plays. Of course, to begin with, the Sanskrit shadow-plays themselves were slight in structure, but by no means so crude as the Javanese ones. The Hindu tradition was so strong that once it was destroyed, not only did the Hindu drama in Java decay and disappear, but a native drama in a developed form failed to appear. Stories from Hindu sources as well as stories from native history and mythology are still shown on the Java shadow-stage, but the plays are all formless and crude. In Cambodia, where the Hindu tradition was indeed very strong and lasted much longer, some remnants of the developed Sanskrit drama are preserved, but the tradition was so strong that no native element could enter it. There, up to the present day, a State theatre, with a special minister

of State, presents the *Ramayana*, and less frequently that play which the Burmese calls the *Eenaung*.<sup>1</sup> Both are remnants of Sanskrit plays no doubt introduced by the early Hindu kings. Throughout the centuries, the two plays have been regularly presented with the full patronage of the king and all the splendour at his command. It is almost a ritual. During the intervening centuries, no fresh incentive had come from India, and no new element, no native element, was allowed to enter it; the result was that the Cambodian *Ramayana* soon lost its freshness. Cambodia, therefore, not only has no native drama; it also failed to preserve for posterity good examples of Sanskrit dramatic literature.

To return to Siam. Even the courtiers did not look upon the Hindu tradition with too much awe and conservatism. They recognized and retained the vital elements of Hindu culture as far as possible so as not to clash with native and Buddhistic elements. The results of such special circumstances are best seen in Siamese literature. The court encouraged and the courtiers produced romances based on and in imitation of Sanskrit-Hindu romances. Native ideas, native tales, and native mythology were introduced into works modelled on Hindu literary works. In drama, the Siamese did not produce native plays, and they retained the *Ramayana* as a play. But they introduced new ideas and kept alive the old. In dramatic literature, as in all other matters, the Siamese had to reject all that was contrary to Buddhism, and some were retained only after much alteration to suit new needs. A consideration of the Siamese play of *Rama* shows clearly the above facts.

The epic tradition was very strong in India and it prevented Sanskrit drama from rising to still greater heights. In the new Hindu regions of Indo-China and the Malay Archipelago epic tradition was equally strong, if not stronger. In India the Sanskrit drama was shackled by the epic tradition; in the new regions the drama was very probably entirely subordinated to the epic. The dramatic performances in Cambodia, in Siam, in Java, before modern influences came in, were based mostly on the *Mahabharata* or the *Ramayana*. Perhaps it is legitimate to assume that the Sanskrit plays introduced into the new Hindu kingdoms were mostly those based on the epics: mostly, but not all. For the *Eenaung*, which is very probably from Hindu-Sanskrit sources, tells a story unconnected with the two epics.

<sup>1</sup> This is explained in the next section

The *Ramayana* was probably the more popular: it is likely then that plays based on that epic were more numerous. The Siamese *Rama* play seems to prove the above facts.

The Siamese *Rama* play is based on the epic. But much had to be altered, much had to be rejected. Rama was taken to be a Future-Buddha; this alteration suggested itself, no doubt, by the existence of the Birth Story, the *Dasaratha Jataka* which must have been known in Siam after Buddhism had taken root (and which, as already stated, probably existed before the epic). Rama was destined to be a Buddha soon, otherwise he was an ordinary mortal; he was of no divine birth, and all the supernatural help he had was his magic bow. In the original, the supernatural was connected with the Hindu religion and Hindu gods. The Siamese had to reject all those; the supernatural in the Siamese play became just simple magic or help by the Siamese equivalent of the Burmese *nats* who are supposed to help or hinder human beings just as ordinary mortals help or hinder each other; the Hindu gods of the epic were religious, whereas the Siamese supernatural beings in their play were quite independent of religion in their acts and behaviour. In the Hindu epic, the gods were behind the scenes, planning the destiny of mortals, but such a conception was entirely rejected by the Siamese. Therefore, whereas the Hindu *Ramayana* was a religious epic, the Siamese play became merely a dramatized *Jataka* Birth Story.

The Siamese play of *Rama*, dramatizing the epic, was influenced also by the Sanskrit plays themselves founded on the epic. Whether non-Rama Sanskrit plays had any direct influence is uncertain; it would be natural to suppose that they might have had some influence, but it was probably very slight. The play as a whole lacks unity and dramatic structure, but taken separately, each scene is quite dramatic. That dramatic element was doubtless borrowed from the finished Sanskrit plays. The character of the villain, the demon king, was borrowed direct from the Sanskrit *Rama* plays. In the epic, he was a worthy rival of the hero in many ways, but in the Siamese play he became merely a boastful villain, who could never rival the hero. The summing up of the character of the demon king in the plays of the great Sanskrit dramatist, Bhasa, by Dr Keith—that he ‘was nothing more than a *miles gloriosus* if not comic’—can be applied to the Siamese demon. The Sanskrit drama aimed at producing sentiment, but it would not allow a division of sentiment. As Dr Keith says: ‘It would not allow the enemy of the hero to rival him

in any degree; nothing is more striking than the failure to realize the possibility of a great dramatic creation presented by the character of Ravana as the rival of Rama for Sita's love. Ravana varies in the hands of the dramatists, but all tend to reduce him to the status of a boastful and rather stupid villain, who is inferior at every point to his rival.' Therefore, it can be safely assumed that the Siamese Ravana stepped straight out of the Sanskrit drama.

However, the interest was more in the epic than in the plays founded on the epic. The Siamese aimed at presenting the epic scene by scene. In the Sanskrit plays, the whole story was not given, only some scenes being taken, as there were limits to the length of a Sanskrit play. A knowledge of the story was assumed in the audience. As a result, in the Sanskrit plays, we have description rather than action. But it was different with the Siamese. The audience as a whole, composed not only of courtiers, but also of common people who were often admitted to a State or palace performance, did not know the story so well as a Hindu audience. Therefore, action rather than description was given in the presentation of the story. The Siamese play came to have many elements comparable to those existing in the Indian open-air performance of the epic, the *Rama Lila*, where the whole epic is presented scene by scene (the *Rama Lila*, though still performed at the present day in India, is very ancient). But the Siamese play is much more developed drama, for there is good dramatic construction in the individual scenes. The Siamese had also to modify the story because they wanted to make the action presentable on the stage. Therefore, they rejected the fight with the vulture king, and they made Ravana much more like an ordinary human being. The demon king was allowed to have ten heads (they could be represented by a series of masks on the head); but he was no longer a very tall giant. All the demons were turned into ordinary mortals as far as stature was concerned. In a *Rama Lila* performance, the battle between the demons and Rama is presented by means of tall, grotesque figures made of wood and paper. In the Siamese performance, as in the Sanskrit plays, living actors took the parts of the demons. The *Rama Lila* is primitive and crude; the Siamese play, thanks to the influence of the Sanskrit drama and native genius, became quite developed artistically. Though following the epic, the Siamese play, unlike the *Rama Lila*, was not bound to follow it blindly.

These points, and also some others, will perhaps be made clearer

by a consideration of the story of the Siamese play. It begins with Rama's father holding court, and information regarding the sons of the king, etc. is given by way of introduction. Then the scene shifts to Sita's court where Rama wins her after beating all other princely suitors by his strength and prowess with the bow. The princess is brought to Rama's palace, and the king calls his ministers and announces his intention of appointing Rama as heir. The junior queen enters and asks for the fulfilment of a boon promised to her by the king when she nursed him back to health. She now asks for the appointment of her own son, Bharata, as heir. The king tries to protest, but the queen remains stubborn. Rama comes and begs his father to keep the promise. So the younger son is appointed. The king, however, suggests to Rama that he should go into exile, pointing out the danger to the State and to Rama himself if he remains in the country. Rama agrees to leave the kingdom for fourteen years, and begs his father to look after Sita, who, however, refuses to stay behind. Lakshmana, the younger brother of Rama, begs leave to accompany his brother. Rama argues with Sita and his brother to make them stay behind, but it is in vain. So the three bid farewell to the king, and amidst the wailing of the courtiers, they leave. It will be noticed that the queen does not ask that Rama should be exiled, as in the epic. In the next scene, a Malay king, monarch of a neighbouring kingdom, is holding court, when a messenger enters and announces the arrival of two princes and a princess, attended by only two or three retainers. The king gives orders for them to be invited, and on learning the identity of the strangers and the reason of their journey, the king offers his throne to Rama, who, however, refuses to accept it. The king then begs Rama to rest a few days, to which request the latter agrees. In the next scene, the ministers in Rama's palace are begging Bharata to take the throne, but he refuses to do so as long as Rama is alive. In the next scene, a messenger is refused admission to the palace of the Malay king by an attendant of Rama, who has been appointed to guard the palace gates. Blinded by conceit, the guard brags to the messenger and a humorous conversation follows until the guard recognizes the messenger as an attendant on Bharata, who is announced as waiting at the city gates. In the next scene, Rama refuses to return to his kingdom until the promised fourteen years have elapsed, and Bharata sadly returns home with Rama's sandals. Rama bids farewell to the Malay king, and amidst the homage and wailing of the court, Rama,



Sita and Lakshmana leave for the forest. The Malay king is a Siamese invention. Though the Burmese translation terms him the Malay king, it is difficult to say where the kingdom was supposed to be as the Burmese call not only Malays but Cambodians and Javanese 'Malay'. There are three explanations of the introduction of the Malay king's court into the play. First, it is probably an acknowledgement of the indebtedness of the Siamese to the neighbouring regions for the story of Rama. Second, the Siamese wanted to lay the scene of the story as near Siam as possible. Third, the Siamese play is essentially a court play, dealing with court-inmates, and with scenes mostly laid at court; the court of the Malay king gives yet another court scene. The next scene is the court of the demon king and we understand that the forest is his domain. In this scene, the sister of the demon king tries to make love to the two brothers but she is not successful. It is not a comic scene as in the *Rama Lila*, and no nose is cut off. She returns to her brother, who at first refuses to interfere with Rama, but agrees to do so when he learns that Sita is with Rama. We are told that the demon king had been an unsuccessful applicant for the hand of Sita before her marriage. The sister turns herself into a doe and Rama is pressed to give chase to it by Sita. Rama, full of evil forebodings, marks on the ground a circle around Sita, praying that no evil being should enter the circle. The doe is shot and as she lies dying, she shouts: 'Lakshmana, help!' Sita begs Lakshmana to go to Rama's help, in spite of the strict command given to him not to leave Sita's side. The demon king now appears, but he cannot enter the magic circle. He is in the guise of a hermit, and as he preaches and begs for food, Sita gradually comes out of the circle. He makes advances, but is unsuccessful. He then seizes Sita and flies away in his flying carriage. The death of the demon king's sister is moving and strikes in a note of pathos, for she dies by the hand of the one she loves. The incident of the magic circle is very dramatic, and the idea of such a circle is borrowed from folklore common both to the Siamese and the Burmese. Rama and his brother then go in search of Sita, and after much wandering, they fall asleep in each other's arms under a tree. Sugriva, the deposed king of the monkeys, is on the tree, and in a soliloquy, he admires the love for each other of the brothers, and regrets that his own brother should be so heartless. He drops a tear which falls on the sleeping princes, who are awakened by it. Rama aims an arrow at the monkey, who begs for mercy and tells

his tale. This meeting of Rama and the monkey king is more dramatic than that described in the epic. In the epic, a spirit advises Rama to seek the monkey king, whereas in the Siamese play the meeting is accidental and more plausible. Rama agrees to help Sugriva. The next scene is again a court scene—the court of the usurping monkey-brother. A battle follows soon after, in which the usurper is killed, to the great sorrow of his queen, who, however, returns to the arms of her first and rightful husband. Sugriva then sends Hanumat as a spy to the demon king. Hanumat succeeds in learning Sita's whereabouts and then opens the gates of the demon city for Rama and his army of monkeys to enter. There is a great fight and the demon king is slain. Rama refuses to take back Sita, who, however, proves her purity by an ordeal by fire. They are crowned king and queen on their return to Rama's own city. The happy ending was perhaps just to please the happy throng who witnessed the play in holiday mood, or perhaps it was borrowed from Sanskrit plays. The Sanskrit dramatist aimed at harmony in every way, and to him, a happy ending was the only ending possible; virtue must be rewarded and lovers must be united. In the Sanskrit plays based on the epic, Sita is always restored to Rama, thereby rejecting the more artistic separation after vindication. The Siamese play and the Sanskrit plays were the productions of courts where polygamy prevailed and women had very little say in the matter. If Rama took back Sita, all was well. The court could not see, or refused to see, that Rama did not deserve Sita after all; after various sufferings, after her faithfulness to Rama, after a captivity against her will, Rama was cruel enough to denounce her as impure.

Though the Siamese *Rama* had many characteristics of a proper play, it had many elements of the kind which we find in the Elizabethan masque. The actors and actresses wore gorgeous dress. Though the majority of the performers were professionals, many lords and ladies probably took part often, for at the Burmese court exiled members of the Siamese nobility took part in the earlier presentations of the play, but it may be that they had to do so as teachers of the new art of court dramatic performance. Music and song were essentially connected with the play, and all the characters danced. There was no scenery, and change of scene was denoted (apart from references in the dialogue) either by the characters leaving the stage, or when some of the characters were supposed to be going on a journey, the actual journey was bridged over by the orchestra playing while the characters

walked up and down the stage—a dramatic practice which was taken from the Siamese and used on the Burmese stage. The language was the language of the court, artificial, but not so removed from reality as to prevent it from being understood by the lowest classes. The play was mostly in verse. The prose was poetic and elegant except in comic scenes.

When the Burmese conquered Siam in 1767, they were able to take the play back with them for various reasons. The play was to both nations a *Jataka* story. The manners and the language of the Siamese court, as depicted in the play, were similar in many ways to those of the Burmese court. The mythology was common to both nations. The play was easy of reproduction at the Burmese court because of the many characteristics common to both countries, and because the captive and exiled members of the Siamese nobility at the Burmese court were ready and willing to help not only because they were anxious to teach the new art to their conquerors, but also because they missed an entertainment to which they had been accustomed for generations.

### 3. THE RAMA PLAY AT THE BURMESE COURT

The age that followed the conquest of Siam in 1767 was one of triumph. In 1752 the Burmese Empire had been destroyed by the Talaings, and the conquerors were ruthlessly putting into practice their policy of stopping the continual war between Burmese and Talaing by exterminating the Burmese as a race. In the same year, however, a humble villager arose, rallied the Burmese around him, with the result that five years later the mighty Talaing Empire was destroyed and the Talaings as a race disappeared from Burma. The obscure villager became the great Alaungpaya, founder of the famous dynasty that bore his name. He tried to conquer Siam, but died when victory was in sight. His son, Hsinbyushin, carried on the war, and continued the extension of the Empire. Manipur was soon conquered, and in 1767 Siam was completely crushed and its capital destroyed. The Siamese court was taken captive to the Burmese capital. The weary army was given no rest, however, for the Chinese had invaded Burma. From 1765 to 1769, the Chinese carried on a serious campaign against Burma. There were four distinct invasions, but each was repulsed. In 1769, the Chinese defeat was complete. Of that age of triumph, Harvey says:

The victory [against the Chinese], coming as it did on top of a

generation of continual warfare which might well have exhausted the race, shows that the exploits of Alaungpaya were no mere flash in the pan, but were broad-based on the energy of the race as a whole. . . . The chronicles for the period are verbose and pompous, but it is impossible to read them without being struck with their fierce pride.<sup>1</sup>

It was during this age of triumph, after the Chinese invaders had been sent back defeated and people could breathe again without anxiety, that the Siamese *Rama* was produced at the Burmese court for the first time.

The court of Ava, then the capital of Burma, was in many ways comparable to the court of Elizabeth after the victory over Spain. Glory and wealth and splendour surrounded the king and his courtiers. Masters in the arts of war, they were also masters in the arts of peace. Almost everyone was learned, and the ablest soldiers and statesmen were also the foremost poets. Queens and ladies-in-waiting vied with princes and lords in the study and practice of learning and literature. Experts in the study of Pali, Sanskrit, and Buddhistic lore, keen students of foreign institutions and literatures, they were essentially Burmese, and enriched their own language and literature with borrowings from all sources. The period 1770 to 1824, the date of the first British conquest, that period of triumph, may easily be termed the age of translations, so keen were the people for knowledge from all sources. Siamese romances, Pali *Jatakas*, Chinese histories, Siamese and Cambodian chronicles, a history of Portugal, a Sanskrit work on sexual science—this list made at random shows clearly the range and variety of the translations. The court led the people in the pursuit of learning and literature. The courtiers were learned, the king was a patron of learning, and at the court the captives and hostages numbered among them great scholars and poets from conquered States. After the toils of war, men turned towards learning for rest and recreation. Men gloried in their country and studied their own literature, history, and institutions, and that study naturally led to the study of those of other countries. Almost everyone studied and almost everyone wrote. The age of triumph was an age of learning.<sup>2</sup>

The Siamese court plays appealed to the imagination of the court. The Siamese captives longed for their native entertainment.

<sup>1</sup> *History of Burma*, p. 258.

<sup>2</sup> Some account of the learned atmosphere of the court and of its more famous translators and poets is given by G. E. Harvey, *op. cit.*, pp. 249 and 250.

They themselves took part in the production of *Rama*, though it seems that most of the actors at the Siamese court were professional; but once the play had been well established in its new home, only professional actors took part in the actual presentation, for the prejudice against the actors and the acting profession was strong: 'actors and beggars, eaters of food thrown away as waste.' Though the play was reproduced faithfully with all its dramatic qualities, the courtiers were more interested in the songs, which were new both in tune and in form. The *Rama* play at once enriched Burmese music and verse-forms. But the court did not at once realize that a new art had come. The Burmese equivalent of the English word 'play' was still uncoined. They called *Rama* a *zat*, a derivative from *ḡataka*. *Zat* had by then come to mean a story; it could mean any story, though to distinguish it from a Birth Story, *hto-zat* (made-up *zat*) was used to denote a non-*ḡataka* story. However, *zat* did not include fables or moral tales or legends and fairy tales. The Burmese interlude was without a name, and the courtiers realized the world of difference that lay between the *Nibhatkhin* and the Siamese entertainment. Therefore, the courtiers just called *Rama* a *zat*; the name suggested itself as they believed the *Rama* story to be a *ḡataka* story. However, when *Aindarwuntha*, the companion play to *Rama* at the Siamese court, was later introduced to the Burmese court, the courtiers coined the term *nan-dwin zat* or 'palace-story', for that play had nothing to do with the *ḡatakas*, and a new name was needed. When the *Rama* play reached the people, they thought it to be a specimen of the native *Nibhatkhin* or *ḡataka*-shown-as-pageant and called it *Rama-khin* or *Rama*-shown-as-pageant. It was only when the native interlude had been moulded into a more developed art through the influence of the Burmese court drama that the term *pya-zat* (the equivalent of the English 'play') was introduced. It is of course impossible to ascertain when and by whom the word was first coined, but by U Kyin U's days, *pya-zat* or 'shown-story' had passed into general use.

To return to the court. The play was presented with Siamese (which were very similar to the Cambodian) dresses and costumes; it was a faithful reproduction of the Siamese model. The introduction of Burmese elements into the play through the professional actors was prevented by the tradition of rigid faithfulness to the Siamese model. The Siamese courtier-captives of course discouraged any interference with the form of their entertainment, which they took to

be a perfect art; probably they thought the Burmese, as far as dramatic representation was concerned, to be barbarians. Moreover, many of the Burmese scholars themselves were against any substantial changes in the presentation of the play at their court. They were for borrowings from, and imitations of, the Siamese play, but they held that the model must be kept unchanged and intact. Their scholastic mind was such. The slightest distortion of the model called forth protests. When the Siamese play, *Aindarwuntha*, was translated as *Eenaung*, there was bitter criticism. The hero of the play had two names; the official title *Aindarwuntha* given by the king of the gods, and the palace name of *Eenaung*. The Siamese called their play *Aindarwuntha*, but the Burmese translator called it *Eenaung*, for that name was easier to say. The play was known as *Eenao* (only a slightly different pronunciation of the same name) in Cambodia. All the same, there were protests against the Minister Myawaddi's calling his translation *Eenaungzat*. Therefore, the scenes (of the *Rama* play) were presented in the same sequence as in the original, the characters were the same, and the story remained the same. However, changes were introduced in the actual words of the songs and speeches. Such changes were considered legitimate because such slight modifications were allowed even at the Siamese court, thereby keeping the play fresh. References to the topic of the day at the court, to Burmese ideals and ideas, to the wit of an actor: they naturally caused slight variations. Withal, the tradition of rigid faithfulness to the original remained. The gesture, rather than actual acting and facial expression, was of great importance in the Siamese play, and that the Burmese court rigidly followed. Gesture was of great importance in the Sanskrit drama, and elaborate treatises were written on the various gestures and their meaning. The code of the gesture in the Sanskrit drama was as rigid as it was elaborate. In the Siamese play, it was very much less elaborate, but still very rigid. For example, when Rama left the court of the Malay king, all the courtiers had to pay homage in an elaborate and very formal way. It is difficult to ascertain the reason of the importance of the gesture in the play; the Sanskrit drama may have influenced it; or the Siamese court wished to show to the common people the manners and customs of their king's palace; or maybe where the stage-lighting was extremely bad, facial expression could not be seen, and therefore gesture alone could convey the meaning to the audience, of course, apart from the actual dialogue. However, the importance of the

gesture passed on to the Burmese reproduction of the play. The rigid tradition soon called forth protests, if not in actual words, then in deeds. If the *Rama* play could not be changed to meet Burmese tastes, other plays would have to be invented. As a result, a native court drama came into being.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4. THE BURMESE COURT DRAMA

It was during the reign of Hsinbyushin under whom the victories against the Siamese and the Chinese had been won, that the *Rama* play was first presented at court. He was succeeded by Singu, who was king from 1776 to 1782. Singu could appreciate and compose good poetry when sober, but such occasions were rare. All the same, the learned atmosphere of the court was maintained, for his queen, the daughter of the famous commander-in-chief who defeated the Siamese and the Chinese invaders, was an accomplished poet herself, and she ever encouraged the continued presentation of the Siamese *Rama* at court. Singu was followed by Bodawpaya (1782-1811), who was one of the strongest despots that ever sat on the Burmese throne. But his despotism was of the enlightened kind, and under his patronage, the learned atmosphere of the court remained unimpaired. The earlier half of his reign saw the rise of a Burmese court drama.

Some time about the year 1783, a young courtier came to the forefront of scholastic circles at the court. This young man, who was a typical product of the age of learning, which was also the age of triumph, had distinguished himself in various campaigns when he began his literary career by composing songs modelled on those of the Siamese *Rama*. He was essentially a scholar, learning and experimenting, and he was an accomplished student of literature, both Burmese and foreign. But in spite of his great learning, he kept his own writings free from too rich an imagery and too bombastic a language; his Burmese was simple and pure. He wrote in the language of the court but without artificiality, so that his songs were not only admired at court, but understood and sung by the common people. After making his name as a song-writer, he produced various literary works of all kinds and thus enhanced his reputation, until he reached the zenith of his literary career in about the year 1785, when he composed and produced the first Burmese court play. This young

<sup>1</sup> Extracts from the *Ramayana*, *The Statue Play* attributed to Bhasa, and the Siamese-Burmese *Rama* play are given in appendix i.

courtier later won fresh fame as a statesman and judge, becoming known to history as the Minister Myawaddi.<sup>1</sup>

As has been stated, there was at the Siamese court a companion play to *Rama*. It was known as *Aindarwuntha*. There was also a Siamese court romance of the same name and dealing with the same theme. *Aindarwuntha* was a prince-soldier, and he had two sets of adventures, one amorous and the other martial. Myawaddi was one of those who broke away from the tradition that the Siamese models at the Burmese court must be preserved without any substantial change. He did not want to have his hands tied through this tradition, and so he did not translate the play, *Aindarwuntha*, but translated instead the court romance. Then he dramatized the romance, and called his new play, not *Aindarwuntha* but *Eenaung*.<sup>2</sup> In *Eenaung*, Myawaddi rejects the heroic adventures and tells only of the hero-prince's romantic intrigues.

The play is far too long. The *Rama* play was long, too, and it took two or three days to present it entire. The court had all the leisure in the world. *Rama*, if translated, would require about 400 of these pages. *Eenaung* is longer; it would be about 600 pages. The play was written more to be read than acted, and as far as is known, it was never presented entire. Only some scenes were acted. The play on the whole is disjointed; it is merely a collection of scenes, connected only through the personality of the prince. As the adventures are purely amorous, there is no action at all. We are told occasionally that the prince has gone on a journey or that he has achieved a conquest, but the scene is always the palace. Following the Siamese style, music and song are important elements in the play, but dances and fine dresses are absent. It is not a masque.

The merit of the play lies in its language, dialogue, and characterization. It is the language of the court, refined and elegant as that of *Rama*. But a certain element of simplicity is in it, and it is not too rich in words or in imagery, so that the common people could understand and appreciate it; in short, the usual clear style of the author, which is the hall-mark of his other writings, is also found in this play. In dialogue, the play retains the freshness and liveliness of the *Rama* play. In characterization, the play is a great advance on *Rama*

<sup>1</sup> An account of his career is given in G. E. Harvey, op. cit., p. 296.

<sup>2</sup> The play *Aindarwuntha* or *Eenaung* has been mentioned earlier in this chapter, on pp. 36 and 44-5.



and on the Siamese original of *Aindarwuntha*. There, as in the Sanskrit plays, the depiction of character was almost unknown. Rama was the perfect hero, Sita a lifeless damsel, Ravana a boastful villain. In Myawaddi's *Eenaung* the hero is shown to be full of faults, otherwise he is still lifeless and uninteresting as Rama. However, the characters of the women, the various loves of the prince, are well portrayed. True, the women pass swiftly through the play, often the interesting heroine never appears again after but one scene, and there is no character development; but the play is a rich portrait gallery where we see live women, who must have laughed and sorrowed at the court. The Sanskrit plays were written by men who did not or could not write of the miseries women suffered at the court, as the king's wives. They wrote from the point of view of men, and they would have it that to be the king's beloved was to reach the limits of womanly happiness. The Siamese court drama followed the Sanskrit in this respect. In *Eenaung*, however, we have a young courtier sympathizing with the women of the court, gently satirizing the king and showing up the disadvantages of being the king's love. The sorrows and laughter of the court maidens are well shown. Gentle satire, pathos, and light comedy keep the play alive.

The contribution made by *Eenaung* to the development of Burmese drama was no less in importance than that made by *Rama*. Of course *Eenaung* itself owed a great deal to *Rama*, but without Myawaddi's play, it seems rather doubtful that *Rama* could have done so much for Burmese drama, for the interest in human psychology and character, so essential to good drama, was absent in *Rama*. Moreover, *Eenaung* taught the Court to break away from the Siamese tradition and to develop a native drama with borrowings from and imitations of the Siamese court drama. Because many of the incidents in the play were invented by the author and not borrowed from the original Siamese court romance, it also pointed out the possibilities of an invented story as the subject of a play. In short, Myawaddi paved the way for the coming of U Kyin U and U Pon Nya.

*Eenaung* at once inspired others to imitate it. Many plays modelled on it were written by courtiers and produced at court. Although, unfortunately, none of these plays has come down to us, extracts in the form of dramatic speeches and songs have come down, and from those we can be certain that many of the court plays were not much inferior to that of the Minister Myawaddi. The most famous of the imitators was the Lady Khin Sôn, herself a scholar and poet of much

renown, whose literary works were worthy rivals in popularity to those of Myawaddi.<sup>1</sup> The native court plays were so popular that even *Rama* soon fell under their sway. Through their influence, the tradition of rigidly following the Siamese version was broken and destroyed, and adaptations of *Rama* in the style of *Eenaung* came to be presented at the Burmese court.

### 5. THE COURT DRAMA REACHES THE PEOPLE

The latter half of Bodawpaya's reign saw the court drama becoming national instead of being confined to the narrow limits of the palace. The national interest in the drama was now so great that the king had to create a new ministry, that of the stage. The new minister greatly developed the puppet-show, which is described in a later chapter. The drama became a regular entertainment at the court, and a dramatic performance in the palace came to be looked upon as a semi-State function. Not only was the drama now looked upon as a national entertainment at the court, but the court drama itself was being spread all over the country through governors and administrative officials imitating the court and holding little dramatic performances of their own. The greatest gift the court performances gave to the acting profession was to raise its status. The actors were still looked upon with prejudice as being nothing more than beggars, but they were no longer considered as being only a little better than rogues and vagabonds. Many travelling companies also came to be looked upon with less disfavour, for they would style themselves 'the King's actors' or 'those who had acted before such-and-such a minister on such-and-such an occasion'. For their ability many actors were given rewards of money and some sort of decoration, which might be a medal or a special dress, and these the actors would wear during their performances with great pride. The Burmese actors of the period were very much in the same position as those acting companies

<sup>1</sup> The fact that the Lady Khin Sôn was the rival of Myawaddi in the literary circles of the court, reflects the difference in character, as far as women were concerned, between the Burmese and most other oriental courts. Burmese women have enjoyed equal rights with men from prehistoric times: 'when greater races bound the feet or veiled the faces of their women, or doubted if she had a soul, the Burmese held her free and enthroned her as chieftainess and queen' (Harvey). Perhaps this difference in the atmosphere of the court had much to do with the sympathetic portrayal of women by Myawaddi in his *Eenaung*. In India, the fact that women were given an inferior social position is reflected in the absence of Sanskrit plays by women.

who put themselves under the patronage and protection of some noble lord in Elizabethan England.

Though the various plays presented at court were performed all over the country in little towns and little courts, the *Rama* play alone reached the remotest corners of the country, and it alone took root in the hearts of the people. What they wanted was action, and of the court plays, only *Rama* could satisfy the desire for action. The original Siamese version had been dead for some time even at court, and what the people saw were adaptations, which contained elements borrowed from the *Nibhatkhin* and the interlude. The story was shortened, many of the palace-scenes cut out, romantic love-scenes between Rama and Sita put in, and the demon king became a comic villain, whom everyone laughed at and liked. The villain as a popular comic character was borrowed straight from the *Nibhatkhin* and the interlude, where the Burmese equivalent of the devil in the English miracle plays, kept the audience in roars of laughter.

There was another important reason why the *Rama* play was so popular, and why the play became more and more Burmese. Under King Singu, while the court contented itself with the Siamese version, a poet outside the court circle broke completely away from the Siamese tradition and recast the story in a purely native form. U Toe, who became famous among the people under Singu and who was given official rewards and recognition under Bodawpaya, was termed the 'Great Master of the *Yagan*'. The *Yagan* is a romance in verse. It probably developed out of the *Hawsa*, a dramatic recitation of a story, but in the *Yagan* the dramatic element is subordinated to poetic description. The most famous of U Toe's *Yagans* was the *Rama-yagan*. In the history of Burmese poetry it enjoys a very important place. It is famous for the clearness and beauty of the language, for beautifully coined words and for richness in imagery. He may be termed the Burmese 'poet's poet' because his language inspired other poets to imitate his style. The *Rama-yagan* was studied by his courtier-contemporaries although he was outside the court; and imitations of his style are found in the works of Burmese authors, including U Pon Nya and authors of the present day.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> An admirable account (in Burmese) of the importance of the *Rama-yagan* in Burmese literature and its influence on U Pon Nya is given in U Po Kya's *The Water-seller's Play of U Pon Nya*, a textbook of the Council of National Education.

However, what concerns us here is his treatment of the story. He does not treat the story as an epic but as a romance. He follows the Siamese version as far as the main incidents of the story are concerned, but his scenes and characters are Burmese, and the life reflected in the poem is the life of the Burmese people in his day. For example, he describes in detail the various festivities on the occasion of Rama's marriage to Sita, and the scene U Toe describes must have been common in the life of the people:

From the dawning of the day, music and dancing did not stop, and silence was banished for long. Acrobats climbed poles, jumped through loops, balanced themselves on ropes, and people threw up their swords in the air and caught them in their hands again, so pleased they were. Drums said, 'Bain, bain, bain!' and the master of drums shouted, 'We are the makers of noise'. Dancers danced and drums played so loud that every person who had a good arm raised it in a dance. Noise, laughter, shouting, music, the feast was an occasion for shows wondrous and entertaining.

The love-scenes between Rama and Sita are no doubt taken from the life of many a Burmese man and maid. In portraying his characters, U Toe makes them more human and nearer to the life of the people. They are princes and princesses, but they are shown to have all the passion and sorrow and laughter of ordinary persons. In describing the characters, he uses terms applicable to the common people, and not to ladies and lords. In describing Sita, he calls her *lonma-galay* or 'little maid', a colloquial term used among the people and not at the court:

Her voice was clear and bell-like, as lovely to hear as music. She could use a crying tone, begging tone, musical tone. Oh, my hand is shaking with desire to imitate her voice on my harp. Little maid, little girl, how beautiful you were!

Throughout the poem there is an undercurrent of gentle satire and humour.

The poem of U Toe was read throughout the country and prepared and taught the people to appreciate the *Rama* play. It taught the professional actors to put more life, more realism into the play. The result was the rise of a national drama, where the elements of the *Nibhatkhin*, the interlude, and the court drama were combined and mixed. Everywhere there were theatrical shows, and the actors and dramatists struggled and experimented. It is unfortunate that none of the plays of those dramatists that entertained the people has come down to us. As they were experimental and unfinished, no one

thought of writing them down and preserving them. But there are accounts describing the dramatic performances of the period, and in the dramatic works of U Kyin U we find echoes of those early plays.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, we at least know that a national drama came into being towards the end of Bodawpaya's reign. It is interesting to note that the rise of a real national drama coincided with fresh conquests by the Burmese. Arakan and Assam fell into Burmese hands under this king.

With the rise of a more realistic national drama, the artificial drama of the court must naturally decay. Already the court drama itself was becoming less artificial, as we have seen, even in the hands of the court dramatists. But their plays, though far more realistic than the translation of the *Rama* play, were still artificial. Adaptations of *Rama* performed at the court were the beginnings of the decay. The decay was furthered by the popularity of U Toe's poem at Bodawpaya's court. It was read again and again by the author before the king. From such readings the court no doubt gradually went over to the national and more realistic drama, and it is perhaps legitimate to assume that plays presented at court in the closing years of the reign were mostly people's plays. The ascension of Bagyidaw to the throne in 1819 on the death of his royal grandfather destroyed finally the court drama, for his queen was of low origin, coarse, uneducated; and learned lords and ladies, poets and scholars, shunned the court. And it was in Bagyidaw's reign that the age of triumph ended with the annexation in 1824 of two of the three maritime provinces of Burma by the British. Under his descendant Mindon, who became king in 1853, the learned atmosphere of the court was fully restored, and U Pon Nya wrote his plays and produced them at court. But as his plays did not differ much from, and were dependent on, the people's drama of his day, he did not in any way revive that special court drama which entertained the Minister Myawaddi and his fellow-courtiers.

<sup>1</sup> The indebtedness of U Kyin U to his precursors is considered in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER III

### U KYIN U

#### 1. THE FURTHER HISTORY OF THE INTERLUDE

WHEN U Kyin U started writing his plays, he was not turning the interlude into a real play. The work had been done before him. It is impossible to determine, however, at what precise point the interlude became a proper play; at what time the dancer-actors ceased to give a play as a side-issue in the midst of their main entertainment of dancing and singing. The interlude, on being influenced by the court plays, became longer and more elaborate, and gradually the interlude ceased to be an interlude and came to be the main entertainment given by the professional dancer-actors. In fact, dancing and singing became less and less important until they disappeared from the play. In U Kyin U's plays, we find no dances, and only in *Daywagonban* do we find some songs. The interlude was further developed by becoming closely connected again with the *Jatakas*.

We have seen how the interlude came into being, how it borrowed freely from the *Nibhatkhin* based on a Buddhist Birth Story, and how it was influenced and developed by the *Rama* play and the Burmese court plays. From the beginning the interlude was not fully religious, though the stories were *Jataka* stories and there was some undercurrent of religious teaching; nor was it fully secular. The court plays secularized the drama in that stories unconnected with the *Jatakas* were introduced. There was still some religious atmosphere in *Rama* because the play was taken to be founded entirely on a *Jataka*, but other court plays had no reference, direct or otherwise, to the religion. The interlude, on being influenced by the court plays, broke up its connexion with the *Jataka* stories. However, it soon went back to the Birth Stories for inspiration. There were many reasons for that return. The prejudice against secular dancing and acting as being sinful still remained strong, and the only way to overcome it was to retain the idea that the interlude preached the religion in some ways. The more common occasions for the presentation

of the interlude were religious feast days, and out of respect for those occasions, the story had to be religious. Moreover, the interlude had to contend with the *Hawsa* or dramatic recitation by one person of a story, which was a rival in popularity; and all *Hawsas* were based on religious stories. However, the most important reason why the interlude had to depend again on the *Jatakas* for its stories was the great popularity of the works of U Awbatha.

Shin U Awbatha was a monk who lived during the reigns of Bodawpaya (1782–1819) and Bagyidaw (1819–37). He was a product of the age of learning. Famed for his pious, religious learning, and knowledge of Sanskrit and Pali, he chose, like his contemporaries, to write in Burmese, and he enriched Burmese prose. The prose before him had been much neglected. The scholars were more interested in verse. When they did write prose, they never succeeded in forgetting that they were essentially verse-writers, and they used rhymed, balanced, and measured phrases. They used too rich an imagery. They broke into verse when they wanted to express any intensity of feeling. Often they introduced Pali words into their writings when there were more suitable Burmese ones. Burmese prose before U Awbatha was in the same position as English prose before Dryden. U Awbatha introduced a prose which was expressive and clear, simple yet effective. It was used to convey varieties of feelings and emotions, but it was always kept restrained and was never allowed to lose its clearness. His works are still well known and popular. The importance of U Awbatha to Burmese language and literature can be judged from the fact that from the junior forms to the Honours course in Burmese at Rangoon University, his books are textbooks.<sup>1</sup>

There are hundreds of Birth Stories, but the most important are the *Ten Big Jatakas*. They are much longer than the rest. U Awbatha wrote Burmese prose versions of the eight longest of those. He followed closely the Pali originals as far as the incidents of the stories were concerned, but he portrayed character in detail, and made the characters more lifelike and therefore more interesting. The story was very well retold, but he was equally masterful in the portrayal of character and in his understanding of human psychology.

He wrote his first *Jataka* in 1785 when Burmese arms were flashing victorious in Assam and Manipur, but vainglorious references to contemporary events found no place in his works. In the peaceful

<sup>1</sup> A short account of U Awbatha is given in G. E. Harvey, *op. cit.* p. 269

atmosphere of a secluded monastery on the outskirts of the little town of Minbu, were the works composed. U Awbatha concerned himself, not with fleeting victories and events, but with the essential characteristics and emotions of human beings. Therefore, at the present day when few remember the victors and victories of the age of triumph, all read and enjoy the works of the learned monk. Though his first *Jataka* was composed in 1785, his works did not reach the height of their popularity until about 1800 when the interlude had been influenced by the court plays. The popularity of the *Jataka* stories of U Awbatha made the precursors of U Kyin U go back to the Birth Stories for inspiration. Though many such stories were presented on the stage, the interludes of the period dealt mostly with the eight made popular by the monk. Apart from the fact that the public probably demanded interludes based on these, the various scenes and characters in U Awbatha's works were good material for dramatization. Moreover, the fact that the stories were well known to the audience made it possible for the dramatists to take only the central events of the stories, leaving out minor and less dramatic scenes. Through that knowledge, too, dramatic irony resulted.

Though U Awbatha never had any interest in the drama of his day, he indirectly saved Burmese drama from sinking into mere bombastic and rhetorical dramatic performances. The national victories and the resulting increase of martial spirit could easily have caused Burmese drama to fall away from the promising beginnings and early development through the influence of *Rama* and the court plays; Burmese plays could easily have become similar to the military plays of China, in which heroes and villains did nothing but fight, and one glorious victory followed another, to the worst Elizabethan chronicle plays and to the worst heroic plays of the Restoration. U Awbatha's works taught the interlude to concern itself more with the portrayal and study of character and to keep the presentation of heroic deeds and vainglorious speeches under control. He came in time. The *Rama* play favoured rhetorical rants and heroic deeds. The Minister Myawaddi did much to create an interest in the study of character and to put the drama nearer to real life. But *Rama* was so popular, and the national victories continued to come one after another so rapidly that the minister's influence on the interlude was being undermined. We have no example of the interlude of the period, but from stage tradition, contemporary references, and the echoes of it in the plays of U Kyin U, we can



guess that the interlude was rapidly becoming heroic when the popularity of U Awbatha's works showed it the way to better things.

The return of the interlude to the fold of the *Jataka* did in no way make the drama suffer. The range was not narrowed, because the Birth Stories were numerous and they were concerned with all classes of society and all classes of events. The *Jataka* was a developed art. Some of the stories existed in India long before the time of the Buddha and therefore they were artistically finished through retelling by generation after generation. In short, the *Jataka* was an artistic and finished short story. It was religious and it concerned itself with a moral, but the moral suggested itself and was not pointed out; the artistic qualities of the *Jataka* did not suffer because it was never pointedly didactic. Moreover, a *Jataka* contained always some interpretation of life, a view of life from a different standpoint. Therefore the interlude gained by returning to the Birth Stories for its themes.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. THE LIFE OF U KYIN U

The existing accounts regarding the life of U Kyin U are very meagre. Even those were obtained only through painstaking research by the learned editors of the Burma Research Society's editions of his two plays, *Parpahein* and *Daywagonban*.

U Kyin U lived during the reigns of Bagyidaw (1819-37) Tharrawaddy (1837-46) and Pagan (1846-53). The exact dates of his life and writings are not known. He was a native of the little town of Sinbaungwe, but he migrated to the capital where he wrote his works, returning to his native town when he had retired from active literary and dramatic life. He was learned and knew Pali, Burmese literature, Burmese history and probably Siamese; at least he knew the Siamese court drama well. He probably first won fame as a writer of songs and speeches for characters on the stage, and in later life a collection of these was published. After he had thus won fame, he probably either set up a troupe of actors of his own or was engaged by such a troupe as its official dramatist; in any case, he was connected with the acting profession and the stage, and he wrote his plays in outline only, many scenes being left to be filled in later when the plays were being presented, very probably under his direction; his plays were merely stage copies and were not intended to be read. He won fame as dramatist

<sup>1</sup> For this section, I am greatly indebted to my sister's M.A. thesis at Rangoon University, entitled *The Jatakas in Burma*.

only in the later years of Bagyidaw's reign; his plays were composed after the first Anglo-Burmese War of 1824. After the end of Bagyidaw's reign he did not write any more plays, though he probably wrote some poetical works. Either by Bagyidaw, or more probably by Tharrawaddy, he was given official recognition and reward. He was made a nobleman, but his exact rank and position are not known. Some think he was appointed a minister and some that he was created Lord of Sinbaungwe. The balance of evidence points to the latter. He spent his later years at his native town in retirement and only left it once to tour the delta districts, where he was received with great respect and esteem, for his plays were being read and produced all over the country. On his return he wrote some verses on the tastiness of the fishes of the Irrawaddy delta.

He wrote many plays and many songs and speeches, but only a few of his works survive at the present day, though accounts of them are many. His works were studied by every dramatist and every actor after him, and are still widely read today. They were very popular also at the court of the Burmese kings; and during Mindon's reign (1853-78) a learned minister drew up a list of the surviving works of the dramatist, with a note that many had been lost. His list included three collections of songs and speeches, and six plays. The minister also left notes and first-hand accounts of the works. All the three collections exist at the present day. Of the plays, three exist, two are entirely lost, and one may still exist, for many scholars living have read manuscript copies of the play; but I have not been able to trace it.

### 3. *MAHAW*

We have seen how the interlude was influenced by U Awbatha's *Jatakas*. When U Kyin U wrote his first two plays the influence of the *Jatakas* on the drama was at the height of its intensity.

The first two plays were *Waythandaya* and *Mahaw*. Both were founded on the *Jatakas* of U Awbatha, and only some central scenes were taken, and a knowledge of the stories was assumed. *Waythandaya* was immensely popular; it was well known up to about 1880, and many adaptations of the play were acted by professionals and amateurs alike in the early days of the British conquest of Upper Burma. One of the informants of Sir William Ridgeway saw a version of the play being presented. However, the actual play of U Kyin U no longer exists. Some Burmese scholars even doubt whether U Kyin U ever wrote such a play, but the editors of *Daywagonban* published by

the Burma Research Society accept the play as having existed. *Mahaw* has fortunately come down to us, and it is of great importance to students of the dramatist, for it is the only extant play of U Kyin U based on an already existing story; the stories of all his other plays (excepting *Waythandaya*) were pure creations of the dramatist.

Perhaps it will not be out of place to give an outline of the story of U Awbatha's *Mahaw-thada Jataka*. Mahaw was a Future-Buddha and son of a rich nobleman. From his childhood he was extremely wise, and the fame of his wisdom spread far and wide. As a result he was invited to the palace of his king and later he became a minister. He had various battles of wit with the four chief ministers, and he emerged victorious, the king adopting him as his son. Now Sulani, the king of a neighbouring country, had a minister called Kaywut who was thought to be very wise. The two countries went to war: there was a battle of words and wit between the two wise ministers. As the two armies stood watching, Mahaw and Kaywut tried their utmost to humble each other. Mahaw threw a priceless jewel on the ground and as Kaywut stooped to pick it up, Mahaw seized him, thrust his brow in the dust, and made it bleed. The two armies thought that Kaywut had submitted, and victory was declared to be on the side of Mahaw's king. The other army returned to their country with the shamed and bleeding Kaywut swearing vengeance on his opponent. Kaywut thought of a plan which he discussed with his king on the highest tower of the palace where nobody else was allowed to enter. The king, however, was very fond of a female magpie which was kept in the tower. Kaywut suggested that the king's daughter should be offered in marriage to Mahaw's king; in case that king should be suspicious, musicians should be sent to that kingdom to sing the beauty of the princess; then the king would think that he was being given the most beautiful princess as an act of friendship; on the offer being accepted, that king and his ministers, including Mahaw, were to be invited into the princess's city to celebrate the marriage, and then they were to be seized and put to death. To this scheme, Kaywut's king agreed, and musicians were sent to the other kingdom. Kaywut followed. Mahaw's king wanted to accept the offer at once, and all his ministers, except Mahaw, advised him to do so. Mahaw pointed out the dangers connected with such an acceptance without inquiry, and as a result, he was exiled by the king in anger. Mahaw, however, was soon recalled and he outwardly agreed to the acceptance. In the meantime,

he had sent spies to the other city, and was informed that there was some scheme afoot, for the king and Kaywut had been seen to retire to the tower before the minister was sent on the embassy offering marriage. On learning that there was only the king's pet, the magpie, present during the conference, Mahaw sent his pet parrot to inquire. The bird flew to the other kingdom, entered the tower, and made love to the magpie. Amidst passionate wooing and idle talk, the parrot succeeded in finding out the true state of affairs. Mahaw then asked his king for permission to go and prepare the bridal palace in the other city. He was given permission to go. On arrival at the other city, Mahaw asked the king there for authority to build a palace and to improve the appearance of the city. Mahaw had to be humoured, and his request was acceded to. Mahaw then sent his men to pull down the houses of various rich persons in the city, including the house of Kaywut. The men desisted only when some payment of money was made to them; the persons concerned thought of course that they were offering bribes without the knowledge of Mahaw, but he had deliberately ordered his men to take the offered bribes. When some of his men were thus creating confusion and intrigue in the city, Mahaw ordered others to dig an underground passage from outside the city to the apartments of the queen-mother of Kaywut's king. When the arrangements had been completed Mahaw returned to his own city. He begged his king to leave him to guard his own city when the king and his ministers were away to celebrate the marriage. Permission was granted. The king and the other ministers set forth to the other city where they were shown a welcome until all had entered the gates: then the visitors were made prisoners. However, in the meantime, Mahaw had secretly come with his own men, entered the city by the underground passage, and taken away as prisoners the queen-mother and other princesses. Now Mahaw appeared at the city gates demanding the release of his king and followers. The demand had to be complied with so as to obtain the release of the queen-mother. The enemy king made peace. He later became great friends with Mahaw, and begged the other king to allow him to adopt Mahaw as his son. That king and Mahaw agreed, and the latter was adopted as his son, becoming the chief minister in place of Kaywut. The story did not end there. Kaywut and the queen-mother conspired to get Mahaw into trouble and disgrace, but their plots came to nothing, the plotters themselves being severely reprimanded.

The story was so well known that U Kyin U could compress it into a short play, taking only the central scenes. U Kyin U took only the final struggle between the two kingdoms as represented by Mahaw and Kaywut. The play begins with the king ordering Kaywut to come before him for consultation, and the minister appears swearing vengeance on Mahaw:

I am Kaywut whose wisdom is famed all over the world, whose wit and learning roar over the topmost towers of this city; I am the tutor and adviser of the glorious king whose commands burn like fire. Though I am so famous, though I have been honoured and respected everywhere, the minister, Mahaw, a youth young enough to be my grandson, shamed me before all my followers. By guile and by cunning he succeeded in winning the battle. He threw down a priceless ruby on the ground and as I stooped to pick it up, he sprang at me, pushed my head down so that my forehead touched the dust, and made me bleed. He was cruel, he was unjust, and my shame was complete. The scar will forever remain on my brow though I have tried my hardest to remove it. . . .

By that soliloquy, the previous events of the story are summed up. From that point the play follows the work of U Awbatha as far as the story is concerned, except for a slight detail. That modification of the story will be considered in connexion with U Kyin U's portrayal of Mahaw's character. The play ends when Mahaw, on receiving the information from his men that the tunnel has been completed, tells the king that all is ready for him to set out to the other city, and the king begins his journey, leaving Mahaw in charge of his own city.

U Kyin U's retelling of the story shows him to be an able dramatist. He realizes that the incident in which Mahaw's wisdom is proved to the world and peace is restored between the two kingdoms is the central and most dramatic point in the story, and that the earlier and later events are less dramatic and are unnecessary to the play. He therefore begins the story from the middle, and in a few lines of soliloquy he retells the preceding events. He ends the play at the point when the tunnel has been made, when success is assured to Mahaw, leaving to the imagination of the audience the task of filling in the details of the actual success. One test of greatness in a story-teller or a dramatist is the ability to restrain himself and end the story at the point when further narration will be unnecessary, and to leave something to the imagination of the audience.

In the portrayal of his characters, U Kyin U also shows his

greatness. His characters are more real and lifelike than those of U Awbatha's. While he makes all his characters live, he fully develops only two, Mahaw and Kaywut, the others serving as the background to those two. U Kyin U improves on U Awbatha in the portrayal of Mahaw. According to U Awbatha, Mahaw was too good, too faultless, too completely able to control himself. When his king sends Kaywut to pay a call on Mahaw, the wise minister forgets all thoughts of duty, courtesy and diplomacy, and blinded by his intense hatred of the enemy, throws Kaywut out of the house. In the *Jataka*, Mahaw was too good and too wise to have any human hatred of Kaywut, a fact which made him suitable to be the hero of a religious story but not of good drama. For his unseemingly, but very human, behaviour, Mahaw is exiled by his king. That is the slight modification made by U Kyin U in the original story. U Awbatha showed Mahaw's king to be very foolish, and Mahaw is exiled just because he could see through Kaywut. U Kyin U, however, does not wish to develop the character of the king, and he wishes to justify the exile of Mahaw because of his more convincing behaviour. In the character of Kaywut, too, U Kyin U introduces new aspects. To U Awbatha Kaywut was the representative of all that is evil, and the worthy foe of Mahaw was Kaywut's king, whose character was fully portrayed. U Kyin U makes Kaywut the worthy rival of Mahaw, and Kaywut is shown to be an able man also, and his point of view is revealed to the audience with sympathy; after all Mahaw was unjust and cruel to shame him before the two armies, and the throwing of the ruby was cunning rather than wisdom. By his sympathetic portrayal of Kaywut, U Kyin U shows his conception that the tragedy of life is not the struggle between good and evil, but between good and less good—a conception which we find in his other plays.

*Mahaw* is not divided into scenes, and the whole play is meant to be presented without any pause or interval and without any scenery.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4. DAYWAGONBAN

The following is the story of the play. The king of Zayyabomi is warned by the court astrologer that the elder of the two baby princes is in danger of being stolen by ogres. The king puts on special guards, but the sister of the king of the ogres succeeds in stealing the baby by cunning. However, instead of eating up the little prince, she

<sup>1</sup> An extract from this play is given in appendix ii.

loves him, and brings him up as her own son. He becomes the heir of the ogre king who has no son of his own, and when the old ogre dies, the human prince becomes king. Of course, the prince has been brought up in ignorance of the fact that he is a human being. Because of his abilities and power, the king of the gods gives him a magic bow and the title of *Daywagonban* or God-demon. Now the king of Thiyizayya has two daughters, the elder of whom is so beautiful that there are many suitors for her hand. Daywagonban is one, but his request for the princess is received with jeers and sneers by her people as he is an ogre. Other princely suitors threaten the old king with war unless the princess is given in marriage to them. The two princesses have been betrothed to the two sons of Zayyabomi's king, but as the elder prince is supposed to have been eaten up by ogres, the old king does not know what to do with the elder daughter, for if he gives her to one prince in marriage, the rest will make war. The younger prince, Daywagonban's brother, arrives to take away his princess, and the elder sister is also given into his charge. The prince and the two princesses journey back to Zayyabomi, but in the forest Daywagonban surprises them, and runs away with the elder princess. The prince gives chase, and is warned by the guardian-god of the forest that disaster will befall him if he continues his chase. But the fiery prince refuses to listen to the god, for he has promised his father-in-law to protect the princess. Daywagonban is not desirous of hurting the prince, but as the latter persists in following him, he shoots an arrow at him. The prince falls wounded, and his followers, including the younger princess, run away in panic, thinking him to be dead. The guardian-god of the forest reappears and cures the prince of his wound. The latter decides to become a hermit, tired of the strife and struggle of life. He wins the respect of a dragon and a *galón*-bird. His bride finds the hermit and requests him to seek the lost princess. The prince-hermit remembers the dragon, and he asks the animal to bring back the captive princess to safety. Meanwhile Daywagonban is annoyed because the princess refuses his love. He puts her into a dungeon as punishment. The dragon, being an animal capable of travelling underground, succeeds in rescuing the princess. The two sisters now try to argue with the hermit to persuade him to take them back to his city, but he refuses to leave the forest. In the middle of their argument, Daywagonban's angry voice is heard, and the princesses run away and seek refuge in a tree. The king of the ogres appears on the

scene, finds at the hermitage the emerald casket in which the princess was first put before being taken to the dungeon, and follows the footprints that lead from it until he comes to the tree. The god of the tree denies all knowledge of the princess, in spite of the arguments and threats of Daywagonban. But as the king of the ogres is persistent, the god of the tree has to put magic dresses on the princesses, making them look like ogresses. The god explains that the footprints are only those of two ogresses who often come to rest in the tree-trunk. Daywagonban looks in the trunk, and thinking the princesses to be ogresses, he is satisfied and goes back to the hermitage. The two sisters thank the god and begin their journey to Zayyabomi which is near, forgetting, however, to take off the magic dresses. Daywagonban, now at the hermitage, accuses the prince-hermit, as the emerald casket was found near his abode, of having hidden away the princess. He accuses him of becoming a hermit to save himself from his, Daywagonban's, wrath. The hermit denies any knowledge of the whereabouts of the princess, and he also denies that he is afraid of Daywagonban's wrath. He is not afraid and is ready to die, but he asks for seven days' grace so that he may spend the time in meditation and prayer. Daywagonban grants the request. The princesses arrive at Zayyabomi, but as they appear to be ogresses their execution within three days is ordered by the king, who is embittered against all ogres. They try to explain, but without avail. That night two goddesses appear to the princesses and comfort them with a promise to fetch the prince-hermit at once. The goddesses go to the prince-hermit and beg him to go and tell the true story to his father. But as the seven days' grace will expire at dawn, he goes to Daywagonban and begs for a few more days, saying that it is a matter of life and death to innocent persons; of course he cannot tell who the innocent persons are, as Daywagonban would go and trouble the princesses if he should know where they were. Daywagonban accuses the hermit of being a coward and a liar, and orders him to be bound, ready for execution at dawn. Realizing that Daywagonban is going to kill his own brother the king of the gods sends his gods to cause thunder and lightning. The ogre ministers point out to their king that the thunder and lightning are signs that the gods are angry because a holy hermit is going to be executed, but Daywagonban refuses to listen to them. The king of the gods now has no other choice but to put a magic sash on Daywagonban to make him realize that he is a human being, and the brother of the hermit. The king of the gods is reluctant to



use the magic sash, and the explanation seems to be that, as he prophesied when he gave the magic bow to Daywagonban, the latter is destined to become a glorious king if he but remains on the throne of the ogres. The realization of what he really is causes Daywagonban to renounce his throne. The two brothers hasten to meet their parents and release the two princesses, determined to return and live as hermits in the forest afterwards, for they are tired of the strife and misery of life.

Since it was first written, learned critics through the intervening years have agreed that *Daywagonban* is the least artistic of U Kyin U's plays. Its chief defect is the lack of real unity. One feels that the dramatist has not planned the course of the story beforehand, and that he just puts in one exciting incident after another until, when he thinks the play is long enough and the story rather in a muddle, he brings in the king of the gods, and with one stroke unties the knot. However, the play is not formless. The scenes are put together with some harmony. The special atmosphere of the play, the impression of its characters belonging to a strange, unreal world, lasts throughout the play and gives harmony to the scenes. Moreover, each scene grows out of the previous one, so that in its breathless excitement the audience never realizes the lack of real unity until the play has ended.

In this play the dramatist does not attempt to portray character. All the persons are full of life and are dramatic, but they are shown only from the outside. This is one of the chief reasons why the play appears less finished and less artistic than his other plays. This lack of interest in the portrayal of character contributes one glaring defect to the play. The young prince, the brother of Daywagonban, after being wounded by the king of the ogres, completely changes his character, and refuses to accompany his betrothed and her sister to his own city, in spite of the fact that the two princesses are alone and unprotected. There is no explanation of this illogical and cruel behaviour, unless of course the prince has partially lost his reason because of his wounds.

The final moral of the story also contributes much to make the play unsatisfactory. The feeling of tiredness with life and strife which is found in U Kyin U's non-*Jataka* plays seems out of place in this. Life is shown to be one glorious adventure, one glorious excitement, and then suddenly at the end we are given to understand that the monastery is the best place in life.

With all its faults, the play is one of the best in Burmese. For

sheer wealth of imagination, no other play can surpass it: gods, demons, princes, soldiers, ogres, spirit-animals<sup>1</sup> fight and strive, entertaining the audience and holding its breathless interest. Moreover, each scene in the play is well constructed and dramatic. The dramatist seems to be bent on giving scene after scene of dramatic incident and dialogue. And to me the play is the most Burmese of U Kyin U's plays. The unreal world of romance and adventure in which the play moves lives in the imagination of the people. The very lack of logic in the play is typically Burmese; no other nation in the world loves life and laughter more than the Burmese, and yet they profoundly believe that life is one long pain and the cloister the only safe place of refuge from life.<sup>2</sup>

### 5. *PARPAHEIN*

This play is U Kyin U's masterpiece.

It begins at once with a dramatic situation. The aged king, wishing to retire to the monastery, is looking for a successor. He has three sons, the eldest and the youngest being the sons of the chief queen, and the other, Parpahein, being the son of a junior queen. Because of his seniority in age and the seniority in rank of his mother, the eldest, Zayathein, should be the heir, but unfortunately for nursing him back to life, the king had long ago promised Parpahein's mother that the throne would be given to Parpahein. To make the problem more difficult, Parpahein, strong and cruel, roams about the country with his drunken followers, and the ministers are against his succession, for it is very probable that the kingdom would go to rack and ruin if the throne were given to him. The king holds his final audience to appoint his successor, and Parpahein and his mother appear on the scene. The mother is uncertain as to what course she should take. She wants her son to be king, but at the same time realizes that public opinion is against him. In the end, at her son's request, she demands the throne for him in full audience. The king tries to argue with her and offers to give Parpahein a province. The queen returns to her son greatly disappointed, but realizing that the fiery nature of Parpahein will lead him into danger unless he is pacified, tries to soothe him and advises him to give up all attempts to become king. However, he thinks that the throne is worth all risks and

<sup>1</sup> For example, the *galôn* and the *naga* which possess supernatural powers in Burmese mythology.

<sup>2</sup> A translation of the play is given in appendix iii.

begs his mother to let him go his own way. The king does not know whether to break his word or not, but he is more or less forced to decide in favour of Zayathein as all the ministers press for the appointment of that prince as successor. The king then retires to the forest and Zayathein becomes king. The new king bears no malice towards Parpahein, who, however, refuses to come and pay homage to him. As the messengers sent to order him to come and pay homage are roughly treated by Parpahein and his followers, the king has no choice but to arrest his brother and put him as a labourer in the elephant stables as punishment. Athumbain, the youngest of the brothers, tries to get Parpahein's release, but in vain. That night, however, Parpahein succeeds in escaping from the stables and tries to scale the walls of the palace with the intention of assassinating the king. The latter, fortunately, is not in the palace. He has come out to listen unrecognized to the gossip of the city and learn the verdict of his people on the happenings of the day and the changes in the palace. The king sees Parpahein, and in the scuffle that follows, the king is victorious. The palace-guards come out in alarm, and Parpahein is given in charge to be executed at dawn. Athumbain arrives on the scene, and succeeds in obtaining the king's pardon for Parpahein, who is, however, ordered to leave the kingdom at once. Parpahein pretends to leave for the frontier, but actually he goes to a remote part of the kingdom. He arrives there at dawn, and succeeds in winning the villagers to his side. He and his men make ready to march on the city. At dusk, in a part of the forest near the rebellious villages, Athumbain and a few bodyguards arrive on an embassy to a neighbouring kingdom to bring back its princess to be the queen of Zayathein. They pitch their camp for the night. During the night, Parpahein and his rebels march through the forest on their way to attack the city, and discover Athumbain and his followers. The young prince is executed on a trivial charge, and his followers are forced to join the rebel army. Parpahein and his men take the city and palace by surprise, but Zayathein escapes with his magic sword and spear. There is still some chance for him to regain the throne with his magic weapons, and he goes to the forest to bide his time. There he finds the dead body of his brother, and he is nearly maddened with grief. An alchemist<sup>1</sup> enters on the scene and recognizing his king, restores the

<sup>1</sup> The Burmese alchemist is somewhat different from his European counterpart.

dead prince to life. The alchemist offers to win back the throne, but the two brothers are weary of worldly glory and strife and they retire to another part of the forest to live as holy men.

The story is well constructed. From the dramatic situation at the beginning, the play moves swiftly to the end. From the first the audience is given a hint that one of the two brothers must fall, but the audience is left guessing which of the two will ultimately fall. The fortunes of each ebb and flow in turn. Even when Parpahein is victorious, there are many factors favouring the restoration of the rightful king to the throne, for Zayathein has his magic weapons with him, and the alchemist appears saying that he can win any throne by his arts. It is only at the very end that Parpahein is shown to be the victor.

Interplay of character is well shown in the play. The characters of Parpahein and Zayathein are contrasted, and against both Athumbain is shown clearly. Parpahein's character is directly shown to the audience, but some traits in the characters of the other two princes are merely portrayed indirectly through the reports that both are popular with the whole kingdom. With regard to Parpahein, it is made clear that the public estimate of his character is incomplete. He is noble and loving to his mother, Athumbain is his favourite brother, and there must be something admirable in a man who could inspire the utmost loyalty in his retainers and who could inspire enough confidence in men to raise a rebel army in a very short time. He is anything but a weak man, and in his intentions he never wavers. One could understand his execution of Athumbain if one realized his strength of character; he is determined to become king, and he could not take the risk of leaving Athumbain alive as the young prince is the son of the senior queen and is adored by the whole kingdom. At first sight, the inclusion of Athumbain seems to be melodramatic and to belong in spirit to a tradition akin to the tradition of Webster and lesser dramatists of 'blood and thunder' in the Elizabethan period—a precocious child saying sweet words, a pathetic little figure sacrificed to the strife of his elders. On further consideration, however, it can be seen that Athumbain is not a figure intended merely to move the pity of the audience. He is not a pathetic and innocent child sacrificed unknowingly in the struggle for the throne. Though he does not mean to cause any disaster to the kingdom, indirectly he is responsible\* for the loss to the country of its legitimate king, for Athumbain is the person who

causes the release of Parpahein. Athumbain is a conscious character in the tragedy: he is not a mere puppet of fate. He is indeed a lovable character, but his very loveliness causes the release of Parpahein and the resulting disaster to the kingdom. It is the tragedy of politics that the most kind-hearted of princes are usually failures as rulers. Parpahein's mother is a well-drawn character, even though we have only glimpses of her. She is torn between her love for the king and for her son. She realizes that the king cannot very well keep his promise, but she appreciates also her son's contention that he is a victim of injustice. She wants her son to be happy and a king, but she has some sense of loyalty to the palace and to the kingdom and does not wish to have wars and disasters. She says bitterly and with due sarcasm that she has only beauty and therefore could give no recommendation of birth to her son, but she is able to understand the point of view of the court that the senior queen's son should be the heir. Above all she cares for the safety of her son, but her fears and her love do not blind her to the fact that Parpahein is determined, and she lets him go his own way when further argument with him is useless. She is the only developed female character in U Kyin U's plays. All other female characters in his plays are just figures that pass along the stage looking pretty.

The moral of the play that the strife of life is empty and wearisome, fits the play, unlike *Daywagonban*. Whoever wins, the audience will pity the other, for both Zayathein and Parpahein, with all his faults, win some regard from the audience. There must be something wrong with human strife if one of the two has to lose; there must be something empty about human glory when its pursuit occasions so much human suffering. Moreover, whatever scepticism the audience may have with regard to the truth of the moral is destroyed, at least partially, by the alchemist's poetic description of the beauty and peace of the forest, which are shown in contrast to the troubles of the palace.<sup>1</sup>

#### 6. THE CHARACTERISTICS AND ACHIEVEMENT OF U KYIN U

Since they were first written, U Kyin U's plays have been studied by all connected with the Burmese stage, for he is essentially the dramatists' dramatist. He was a real son of the stage, and knew drama, not merely as a poetical exercise, but as a practical art. He

<sup>1</sup> A translation of the play is given in appendix iv.

new and had to consider the various factors that were influencing the drama of his day. It was he who first used the various elements that composed the drama he found, many of which were conflicting and alien, to produce a harmonious national drama. After him there could be only one drama for the whole nation, as both the court and the people at once hailed him as their dramatist. The plays that U Pon Nya later wrote for the court were presented to and understood by the people, and the standard of criticism for both was the same: J Pon Nya's plays were judged by references to U Kyin U.

I now propose to consider U Kyin U's use of the various elements that formed the drama when he first started writing his plays. Such a consideration will not only help us in our estimate of the dramatist but also give us some idea as to the nature of the interlude and the factors that influenced it to develop. As I have written in detail on the history of the interlude in previous sections, I propose to make only a general review here. However, the remarks here are intended as supporting evidence found in U Kyin U as to the reliability of the oral tradition and information on which I have to depend with regard to the statements in previous sections.

The religious element was very strong in the interlude. As has been already stated, the element was present from the beginning but it was partially undermined by the court plays, and it was restored again as a result of the popularity of U Awbatha. In the interludes based on the *Jatakas*, the religious element was of course not out of place and the moral was not put in merely for the sake of having a religious atmosphere: the moral and the story were connected. But when the religious element and the moral teaching were put in merely to make the interlude appear religious, the harmony of the whole was fully destroyed. In some interludes, religious discussions and direct preachings were often introduced. Even in the *Jatakas* of U Awbatha, let alone the interludes of less lettered and less artistic writers, religious teaching was accepted without question, and the villain was totally wicked and the hero was completely good; the very nature of the *Jataka* made it so. But such a state of affairs, such an atmosphere, does not suit an artistic play. Therefore, it can be seen that though the religious element contributed much to the rise and development of Burmese drama, U Kyin U had to be careful; if the religious element offered advantages, the use of it was also beset with dangers and difficulties. In *Mahaw* he takes a *Jataka*, but he makes both the hero and the villain more

human. He drives home the moral—the power of knowledge and learning over all obstacles—with all the more force through making the good hero less good, and the bad villain less bad. Though he is quite artistically successful, he abandons the *Jataka*, presumably because, apart from the fact that an original story gives him more scope to use his dramatic powers, he cannot develop the character of the villain and of the hero as much as he wishes. In an earlier section I have stated how the conservative nature of the people and the danger that the comic spirit of both the actors and the audience might cause the drama to be profane gave rise to the stage convention that the Buddha should never be presented on the stage. That and the subsidiary conventions resulting from the same causes were against a dramatist making the villain more interesting and the hero less good. The only way out was to make the villain a comic character, as was done even in the earlier *Nibhatkhin*, and thus make the portrayal of him more sympathetic. U Kyin U, however, is not satisfied with that, and therefore he completely abandons the *Jataka* after writing two plays based on the Birth Stories. In *Daywagonban* the hero has villainous tendencies, but not satisfied with even that, in *Parpahein* the villain is the hero, for though he is shown to be the less worthy person to be king, he is the centre of our interest, as Macbeth the villain is the hero of Shakespeare's play. In the *Jatakas* the struggle is between the totally good and the totally bad, but in U Kyin U's play it is between the less good with the lesser. Withal, U Kyin U does not completely drive away the religious element. The best drama does not merely entertain but instructs, and we find some religious or moral teaching in his plays. He accepts religion as a refuge from life, but he does so fully realizing that often religion is used as a mere excuse, for he makes a minister say in *Parpahein*: 'We give all excuses to live. We appeal to our religion, we appeal to this, we appeal to that . . .'

He realizes, too, that often the religion does not give complete comfort; Zayathein, in the same play, says:

Until we reach Nirvana, we shall go through again and again this torture of grief, this torture of having to lose always the one we love . . . But this knowledge does not stay my tears . . . I am wise, I know my religion. But when it comes to grief, my experience and my learning cannot help me drowning in the ocean of sorrow.

The court dramatists, especially the minister, Myawaddi, showed how the interlude could display more interest in character, but the

popularity of the heroic *Rama* and the coming of national victories undermined their influence, until U Awbatha came with his *Jatakas*. U Kyin U improves the art of portraying character. His interest in, and his mastery of, the portrayal of dramatic character we have already considered in the sections dealing individually with his plays; but I wish to consider here the question of the absence of developed female characters in his plays. His plays have many women in them, but except for Parpahein's mother, they are undeveloped. The princesses in *Daywagonban* are just pretty dolls. In *Mahaw*, when Mahaw's men go round the city threatening to pull down houses on the plea that improvements have to be made to make the city fit for the coming of their king, a lady-in-waiting of the queen-mother comes out and scolds their leader; she is very realistic and full of life and fiery temper, but we have only that glimpse of her. In *Daywagonban*, the ogre-princess, she who steals the little prince, begins well, but just as we are becoming interested in her, she changes into a mere doll. Even Parpahein's mother is unsatisfactory in the fact that we see too little of her. When we remember that there are such living male characters as Mahaw, Kaywut, Parpahein, Athumbain, it is surprising that there is not one female character comparable to them. I can offer no explanation. Myawaddi had already portrayed quite interesting female characters, and one would have expected U Kyin U to take some hint from him. And there was no difficulty in getting suitable actresses to take the parts, for from the very beginning women took equal rank and importance with men in Burmese dramatic productions; there was no need to dress up boys as women to take female parts as was done on the Elizabethan stage.

Comic characters are also absent from U Kyin U's work. The comic spirit was strong in the *Nibhatkhin* and also in most, if not all, interludes. The villain as chief comic character was the hall-mark of the interlude, and even in the court plays comic figures were many; the demon-king in *Rama* was a very popular comic character, and there is a gentle satirical vein in Myawaddi. That comic element U Kyin U rejects not completely, but almost. The dialogue between the leader of Mahaw's men and the lady-in-waiting is humorous, and there is some element of humour in the sneers and jeers of the ministers of the court of the two princesses, at Daywagonban's embassy asking for the elder princess. The ogre-princess, in her first few words, reminds one of the comic villainess of the interlude and of the demon-king's sister in the popular adaptations of the *Rama*



play. In *Parpahein* the speech of a minister in which he tries to hide his fear for his own safety under a cloak of religious-mindedness has some element of satiric humour. But these are all the instances of the comic spirit in his plays. I can offer no explanation of this almost complete absence of the comic element. Perhaps U Kyin U thought that the introduction of comic scenes would spoil the artistry and unity of his plays; perhaps he found the drama in danger of being swamped by the comic element if there were to be no checks against it. I do not know.

The actors and the audience were fond of heroics and scenes of 'blood and thunder', with the result that the interlude was becoming heroic. *Rama* was heroic, and the fiery speeches of Rama and the demon-king were extremely popular and were imitated in the interludes. The feat of strength where the bow was bent by Rama, the fight between the monkey-princes, the battle between Rama's forces and those of the demon-king, the killing of the latter by the god-given bow—held the audience breathless. The influence of Myawaddi counteracted, though rather feebly, the element of heroics, but the national victories increased the appetite of the people for scenes of mighty deeds and glorious victories. The return to the *Jataka* checked the heroic element, but we find traces of it in U Kyin U. Mahaw, Kaywut, Daywagonban, and Parpahein indulge in bombastic and fiery speeches. The execution of Athumbain and the raid on the palace by Parpahein's rebel army savour of the heroic interlude. The wounding of Daywagonban's brother by the god-given bow, the fight between the *naga*-dragon and the *galôn*-bird, the scenes where the two princesses and the hermit are shown bound and dangling from the gallows ready to be executed later, the thunder and lightning sent by the king of the gods to warn Daywagonban—all these are echoes from the blood-and-thunder interlude. In fact one might call *Daywagonban* a series of heroic interludes.<sup>1</sup> However, U Kyin U is very much

<sup>1</sup> *Daywagonban* also shows some traces of the influence of *Rama* on the interlude, apart from the heroic element. The scene where the princes demand the elder sister is reminiscent of the scene where the hand of Sita in marriage was sought by Rama and other princes. The love of Daywagonban for the princess is a counterpart to the love of the demon-king for Sita. The stealing of the princess and the god-given bow are direct borrowings from *Rama*. As has been stated, the ogre-princess reminds one of the demon-king's sister, who was changed into a comic villainess in popular adaptations of the court play.

restrained in his use of the blood-and-thunder scenes, and his heroic heroes have depth of character; they are not mere figures shouting defiance and doing glorious deeds. The artistic genius of U Kyin U is mainly responsible for the restrained use of heroics. But there is another reason. The audience was no longer keen on such things; when U Kyin U was writing his plays, the Anglo-Burmese War of 1824 was over, the Burmese had tasted their first defeat for many years, and two of the three maritime provinces were in British hands.

The plays not only entertain but make the audience think. U Kyin U is out to teach the audience to look at both sides of a question, for in *Parpahein* there is some justification for Parpahein's contention that he is a victim of injustice; after all the old king did make the promise, and the queen did deserve that promise, did earn it as a reward for saving his life. Yet we can sympathize with the decision of the king to give the throne to Zayathein. In that play, too, we are shown the dangers of being humane in certain cases, the dangers of becoming a kindly man at the cost of losing strength as a king, for Zayathein and Athumbain are both weak in their treatment of Parpahein; good brothers they are, but their goodness plunges the kingdom into disaster by causing the wrong man to hold power. In *Daywagonban*, we are shown how empty strife is, how the irony of life plays tricks on us, poor mortals, for look at Daywagonban, he is fighting his own brother to win the very princess who was betrothed to him since childhood. In that play, too, we are set a problem. Is the hermit's life worth the sacrifice of the three glorious years of prophecy—would it not have been better if the king of the gods had left well alone? The king of the gods himself is not keen on telling Daywagonban the true nature of his birth and parentage, for it would result in the loss of the promised years of glory to the kingdom of the ogres. It is well for the hermit and the princesses to be saved, but what of the ogre-kingdom left without a king and without a successor? Is it right for Daywagonban to save his soul at the cost of the kingdom that has adopted him? The same question arises with regard to Zayathein. When the alchemist is so ready, and so certain of winning back the throne, is it right of Zayathein to retire to the peace of the forest, leaving his unhappy kingdom under a drunken king? The retirement to the cloister may often be an act of great selfishness and may even appear ridiculous as in *Daywagonban* where the hermit calmly lets his princess wander unguarded in the forest. These problems, which interest us now, interested still more the

audience of U Kyin U's day, for then the throne was disgraced, half Burma was lost, and men were depressed and tired of life; many shunned the court and lived in retirement and in peace, and some turned to the comforts of religion and the monastery. And there was the eternal question of succession, for Alaungpaya's dynasty—the last in Burma—did not settle the succession by any fixed rule; sometimes brother succeeded brother, at other times son or grandson; promises and appointments with regard to the succession were made only to be broken later. Men did not know which prince to follow; Bagyidaw, the reigning king, was a good man, a kind man, but a weak man also, under the thumb of a wicked and scheming queen; a kindly man, a good husband, he was responsible for the collapse of organization at the court and the resulting British victory; it would not do to choose a weak prince like that king and like Zayathein; but it was not very safe to choose a strong prince, for he might be foolish like Kaywut and be overcome by the wisdom and cunning of the British. Men were troubled in mind and weary of politics, and that feeling of tiredness with the world is found in U Kyin U. In fact the political conditions of the times, especially the war with the British, must have contributed much to the ideas expressed in the plays; ideas that must have been appreciated by the people who had just realized, with the defeat of their forces and the death of their General Bandoola—a product of the heroic age of triumph—in the recent war, the transitory nature of human glory, the bitterness of defeat, and the sufferings of war. The sympathetic portrayal of Kaywut was due mainly to the genius of the dramatist, but the recent defeat must have contributed something towards it, for both U Kyin U and his audience could see in Kaywut their own court, foolish but none the less pathetic through defeat. They could sympathize with that character as Milton did with Satan. The ability to appreciate the point of view of the other side, the ability to see the good points in the villain, are also due in some measure to the same war, for the Burmese found the British to be valiant foes, who treated the captured wounded with loving care—a practice unknown before in the East—and found them to be conquerors who were kind to the people of the annexed provinces. Therefore the plays of U Kyin U are the product of his times.

U Kyin U, with his spirits and magic and gods and heroic deeds, is doubtless a romantic. His scenes, where some of the characters on the stage are supposed not to see and hear the others, though all are

visible to the audience, and his scenes where actors take the part of animals—a practice which appears ridiculous sometimes, as in *Mahaw* when the parrot and the magpie are represented by a man and woman—will not appear in the plays of a realist, such as U Pon Nya. But U Kyin U is romantic only in the best sense of the word, for his plays are not very far removed from truth to life, nor are they formless. How far his plays are true to life can be seen from a perusal of them and the foregoing comments, but the other statement needs explanation. U Kyin U determined the form of the Burmese play, its division into scenes. *Rama* was divided into scenes, but it was very, very long. The interlude, by its very nature, was not thus divided, but when it became longer and more and more a regular play, the problem of form was not at once easy of solution. In *Mahaw* the whole action is undivided, but his other two plays he divides into scenes. Moreover, in his plays we find each scene artistically completed, yet one grows out of the other, thereby giving a unity to the plays, and preventing them from being merely collections of unlinked scenes and interludes. Even in the less finished *Daywagonban* we find that each scene has some connexion with the previous and the next one; for example, the apparently unconnected scene where the dragon fights the *galôn*-bird contributes to the main action, for the dragon saves the princess. It was U Kyin U who in effect first laid down the chief doctrine of Burmese dramatic technique, that the essence of a play should be the construction of the plot: the story could be invented or borrowed, it might be well known to the audience or otherwise, it could be realistic or romantic; but the unfolding of the story should be clear and logical, and nothing should be hidden from the audience. To obtain these results, the scenes needed not only to be well constructed, but to be connected with each other and all clearly related to the main action—a doctrine which was admitted in theory unto the last, but neglected in practice during the decadent period of the drama, with chaotic results.

## CHAPTER IV

### U PON NYA

#### 1. THE LIFE OF U PON NYA

U PON NYA was born about the year 1807. His father was a minor nobleman at the court of Prince Tharrawaddy, a younger brother of King Bagyidaw (who lost the war against the British), and the young boy was brought up under the patronage of the prince. He was a precocious child and was placed under the tutorship of the most learned monk of the day. The prince rebelled against his brother and became king in 1837. U Pon Nya, in the meantime, had become a monk. During the rebellion, his father fell fighting for the prince, and the new king wanted U Pon Nya to take his father's office, but the future dramatist preferred to remain a monk. King Tharrawaddy continued to consider himself as godfather to U Pon Nya, who therefore was in constant contact with the court. On the death of that king, his son Pagan ascended the throne, and U Pon Nya left the capital for the little town of Salè, where he began to compose literary essays in about 1847. His essays and lyrics became immensely popular, and he came to be known all over the country as the 'Master of Salè', by which name he is more commonly referred to. In 1850 he became a layman again, and was appointed a court poet at the court of Prince Kanaung, a brother of the reigning king, Pagan. In 1851 Burma went to war again with the British and lost some more territory. Prince Kanaung and his other brother, Mindon, rebelled against the half-mad king. Mindon became the new king and made peace with the British. Kanaung became the crown prince, and U Pon Nya his official poet. He was then already recognized by the nation as the foremost poet, scholar and essayist of the day. He wrote astrological works and won further fame as an astrologer. He believed that he was liable to die on the scaffold and asked for a proclamation by the king exempting him from punishment by death; otherwise he begged to leave the court for the monastery. The required proclamation was

made. In about 1855 he wrote his first play, *Paduma*. In the next year the two brothers, the king and the prince, quarrelled, and when the misunderstanding had been explained, U Pon Nya was ordered to write a play to celebrate the occasion, and *The Water-seller* was composed and presented. As reward, the king appointed him chief court-poet and created him lord of Ywazi village. He would have been made a ruling chief or official had he not been born with a crippled arm, because a man born with any defect in his limbs could not become a member of the ruling class. U Pon Nya took part in various court intrigues. Most of his plays had some hidden meaning that concerned the court, and they played an important part in the plots and counter-plots to decide who was to be heir, for though Kanaung was officially the heir, the king's sons did not accept him.

In 1865 Myingun and Myingondaing, two of the king's sons, decided to make a bid for the throne. They consulted U Pon Nya as to the most suitable time as foretold by the stars, and the poet told them that the next day at noon was the luckiest time for the rebellion. This connivance in a rebellion against his king and his master, Prince Kanaung, was a very disloyal and ungrateful act, because the fiery temper of the two princes was well known, and it was plain from the beginning that the rebellious sons intended to put to death at once their own father, and their uncle, who also happened to be the father-in-law of Myingun. U Pon Nya defended himself later by saying that he was compelled to give his opinion as to the most suitable time, because he was threatened with certain death. But he did not inform the king of the plot when the princes had left after promising him the highest rank of nobility; and though he might have been threatened with death at the beginning, he seemed to have been well content with the promised reward and quietly left the capital that night. The next day at noon, the rebellion broke out. The courts of justice where the crown prince and the wisest in the land were sitting in session were attacked, and the palace raided. The king escaped, but the crown prince and his fellow-judges were killed. The rebellion was put down the same afternoon, but by then the flower of the court and the nobility had perished. The two rebels escaped, Myingondaing to die of fever at Rangoon, and Myingun to retirement in French Indo-China. U Pon Nya was arrested and tried on a charge of treason by the king himself, and though a sentence of death was clearly deserved,

the king remembered the proclamation exempting the poet from punishment by death, and as he had a great admiration for the works of the dramatist, U Pon Nya was merely sent to the house of the governor of the city as a prisoner on parole. Unfortunately, the junior wives of the governor and the ladies at his court took too great an interest in the comfort of the prisoner, and the governor became extremely jealous. After three months of what he suspected to be romantic intrigues between his prisoner and his ladies, the governor decided to put U Pon Nya to death. So one night in 1866 the poet was secretly executed, and the body disposed of never to be discovered, under the orders of the governor. A few weeks after the secret execution, the king granted full pardon to U Pon Nya, believing him to be still alive. Only then was the truth discovered, and when the news was reported to the king, he said wearily: 'Alas, a dog has killed a man.'

## 2. *PADUMA*

The story is taken without any modification from a *Jataka*. A king has seven sons, and he is warned by his ministers that the princes might rebel. In spite of his great love for his sons, the king has no choice but to exile them with their princesses. The seven princes and their consorts leave the capital, but soon lose their way in the forest. There is no food, and the younger princes beg their eldest brother, Paduma, to agree to their plan of killing and eating their princesses. Paduma tries to argue against the proposal, but realizes that his arguments are in vain, for the six brothers are maddened with hunger. He has no other way of escape but to flee with his consort. So before dawn Paduma and his princess run away from the others. The sun rises and the two are in great agony through the heat. They reach a stretch of sand, and Paduma is cheered because sand is usually found near a river. But the very sand which cheers Paduma increases the heat and burns the delicate feet of the princess. She can go no further and begs the prince to kill her; she would then be relieved from her agony, and he would have a better chance of saving himself alone. But the prince cheers her by encouraging words, and piercing his flesh with his sword, makes the princess drink the blood to quench her thirst. Then he puts her on his shoulder and continues the journey. Soon they reach a wide river, on whose banks grow fruit trees, and safety at last seems assured. As they rest, they hear a cry for help and see a man tied to a raft, floating helplessly down the river. The princess pities him.

and so does the prince, who jumps into the river and saves the man. He is a criminal and has been sent down the river after having had his hands and feet cut off, for he has been convicted of a felony. He thanks the prince, and promises to try and become a good man. The prince praises him. The princess then suddenly starts to cry against her hard fate, because she has no pretty clothes to wear. She wants to appear handsome before the man, but the prince does not realize that, and thinking that the real reason for the dissatisfaction is hunger, goes in search of fruit. The princess at once makes love to the limbless man, who at first refuses her advances. He has to agree to love her when she threatens him with immediate death. She plans to get rid of her lawful husband; she will pretend that she wants to go to the top of the adjoining hill to offer fruits and flowers to the hill-spirit as a token of gratitude for their safety; then the prince will accompany her; because he has no belief in offerings to spirits, he will be looking down the hill-side as she pretends to make the offerings, and she will then push him down. The prince comes back, and as planned, he is pushed down the hill-side into the river. Believing him to be dead, the princess returns joyfully to her new love. However, a fig tree saves the prince, for he is caught on its branches. A crocodile arrives on the scene in search of figs and finds the prince lying dazed on the tree. He carries the prince back to the latter's city. Paduma is welcomed back by the people, for the king has died pining for his sons and the kingdom has been trying to trace the princes and their consorts. He becomes king.

The princess serves and looks after the limbless man in the forest, but the man soon wishes to go back to the city as he misses its sights and pleasures. She carries him in a basket and tramps from city to city until, without knowing it, they arrive at Paduma's capital. The city is having a holiday and people throng the streets, for it is Paduma's birthday. The princess is greatly admired, as the people think her to be a faithful and dutiful wife. The king with his ministers tours the city, and he hears from the people of the arrival in the kingdom of a faithful countrywoman. Paduma wishes to reward her for her virtue, and the princess, the seeming countrywoman, is brought before him with the limbless man. She fails to recognize the king, who, however, knows her at a glance. He tells the facts to his ministers and orders that the couple be executed at once. As it is the king's birthday, however, no execution can be carried out, and the princess and the limbless man are put into prison to await execution



at dawn. By that time the king recovers his composure and desires no revenge. He inquires whether the executions have taken place, and on learning that the couple still live, he orders that they should only be banished from the kingdom.

This was the first play of U Pon Nya, and we find in it his dramatic art only half-developed. The play is full of faults, and by common consent, it is considered the least artistic of his work. He fails to portray character, and the persons in the play appear to be mere puppets. This fault is seen most clearly in the first two scenes where the brothers speak in turn, without passion, without life. Paduma is very unsatisfactory. He is too good, too inhumanly good. In the earlier scenes, he is absolutely without life. In the third scene, however, where he and his princess are running away to safety, Paduma comes to life, and both appear real and human. After that, he becomes uninteresting again, and he keeps on preaching sermons, which must have been rather boring to his wife. In the last scene he comes to life again. The princess is not so unsatisfactory. It is true that she is portrayed only from the outside, and the sudden change from a good to a wicked woman is illogical; but that is what U Pon Nya wants to show. He wants to show that there is no logic in a woman's character. It is bad from the very beginning, and it will always be bad; a man should not have any faith in women, and if a man has such faith, he is sure to be soon disillusioned, and he has only himself to blame for such disappointment.

U Pon Nya's chief object in this play is satire, but he fails to achieve his aim, because the satire does not convince us. It is too bitter to convince. His failure is surprising when one remembers that he is the greatest literary satirist in Burmese literature. When he wrote this play, he was already very successful as a satirist. The merit of his best satire is his humour, which prevents any suggestion of bitterness, and yet in *Paduma* humour is absent and bitterness is the chief note. The play by no means expresses the real attitude of the dramatist towards women. It expresses only a temporary mood. He was a great favourite with the ladies of the court, and among his friends and patrons were many women noted for their nobility of character: the chief queen of Mindon, the most loved person at that time, was one of them. Moreover, in his other plays he shows his respect for women; the wife of the water-seller and Ma-di in *Waythandaya* are charming and noble women.

U Pon Nya wrote this play as a warning and admonition to

those ladies of the court, junior queens, who were indulging in romantic intrigues with courtiers. It is amusing to reflect that even as a monk, U Pon Nya himself was suspected of having had amorous adventures, and he lost his life through his friendship with the charming ladies of the governor's household. The first performance of the play was received with an uproar of protest on the part of the court-ladies, and they clamoured for the destruction of every copy of the play. But there was much that was new and interesting in it, and the general opinion was that a new dramatist of rich promise had arisen. Therefore the king, before whom the performance was made, did not yield to the clamours of the ladies, but ordered that their request to U Pon Nya asking him to write another play praising the virtues in women, should be complied with. As a result, he wrote *Waythandaya*.

The great merit of the play is in its lyrical qualities (which I am unable to reproduce in my translation). The vigour of the verse, its rhythm, the harmonious and elaborate rhyme scheme, the richness of the imagery, all join together to make this play the most lyrical in Burmese drama. However, these very qualities were the butt of criticism by contemporary critics who, used to the straightforward and clear style of U Kyin U and his imitators, held that too rich a language was a fault in a play, for there would be a danger of conveying wrong or obscure meanings to the audience. As those critics belonged to the 'people's' stage, they were of course thinking of the less learned audience outside the court circles. There is no doubt that in some scenes of *Paduma* the charge of difficulty and obscurity of language is quite justified. For example, when the crocodile and Paduma speak about women loving dogs and pigs, U Pon Nya is speaking only metaphorically, but one realizes it is so only on a second or third reading of the play. But the language in the scene where Paduma and his princess are running away to safety, is as clear as it is beautiful.<sup>1</sup>

### 3. THE WATER-SELLER

The story of this play also is taken unchanged from a *Jataka*. A prince returns to his city after a stay at a university in India. As he rests for a few minutes outside the gates, a water-seller enters, and in a soliloquy says that he is just entering the city to sell water and earn

<sup>1</sup> A translation of this play is given in appendix v.

some food. He leaves and a woman water-seller appears. She is even poorer than the other water-seller, and she too enters the city on her daily round. The prince also leaves the scene. In the next scene, the prince is shown meeting the ministers of the kingdom, who tell him that his father the king is dead, and the country has been anxiously awaiting his return. He is crowned king. At midday, the two water-sellers meet outside the city gates after their rounds, and they fall in love and decide to marry. The woman is anxious that the marriage should be celebrated properly, and wants the man to bring his dowry of a silver halfpenny and join it with hers, which also consists of a silver halfpenny. The man has hidden his in a crack in the wall on the other side of the city, and towards his hiding place he joyfully runs at full speed. The new king is looking out of a window of his palace, and sees the man running joyfully, heedless of the burning sun and the hot pavements of the street. The king wants to know the cause of this strange behaviour, and summons the man before him. The man tells him the reason. The king likes him and gives him a silver halfpenny, requesting him not to brave further the intense heat of the day. The man accepts the gift in great joy, but begs to be allowed to fetch his own coin. The king gives him a hundred coins, a thousand, a million, but still the man wishes to go and fetch the hidden coin, for he thinks that the small coin is more valuable than any other property on earth, as he has earned it by his own labour. The man's character wins the love and admiration of the king, who therefore wishes to give him half the kingdom and make him the crown prince. To this desire on the part of the king, the ministers give their assent, and the water-seller becomes crown prince. He orders his officials to fetch the woman water-seller, who is waiting at the city gates. He then goes in state to the other side of the city and brings his half-penny back in triumph. In the evening, the king wants to go and rest in his forest-garden, tired after the events of the day, and he requests the crown prince and princess to accompany him. They arrive at the garden. The princess goes to another part of the garden with the ladies to play among the flowers, and the king dismisses his courtiers and goes to sleep on the crown prince's lap. As the king sleeps, the water-seller decides to kill him and seize the throne. But he remembers and realizes his duty and his grounds for gratitude to the king. His greed and his sense of gratitude struggle, and in the end the good side of his character prevails. The king wakes up, and to him the crown prince confesses the truth, expecting swift punishment. But instead, the

king offers to give the throne to him, and serve under him as a minor official. This further kindness on the part of the king makes the prince realize more fully how wicked he has been in thinking of killing his master. He begs leave to become a hermit in the forest, for he feels that power and wealth destroy the goodness of character in man. The king praises the prince for his piety, and gives the permission. The prince further requests the king to look after his princess, which the king promises to do. The princess, ladies, and courtiers enter, and to them the prince narrates the incident. He bids farewell to his princess who, however, refuses to stay behind without him, and begs leave to accompany him to the forest as a hermitess. Permission being obtained from the king, the two leave for the forest.

This is perhaps the most artistic of Burmese plays. The play moves smoothly, and the action is continuous; nothing unconnected with the main action is put in. The time of the action represents one day: at sunrise the two water-sellers begin their rounds while the prince rests for a few moments at the city gates; from that time till midday, the prince is with the ministers who crown him king; at midday, the water-sellers have finished their rounds, and they meet; soon afterwards while the king rests at the window, fatigued with state ceremonies and affairs, he sees the water-seller; in the afternoon, the water-seller marries his lover, and then fetches the hidden coin, while doubtless the king is busy again with state affairs off-stage; after sunset, the king is tired with the events and affairs of the day, and goes with the water-sellers to the garden; at nightfall, the water-sellers enter the forest. Almost every hour of the day is accounted for in logical sequence, and very little happens off-stage. The whole of the action takes place around the city, and there are only three different places represented on the stage, outside the city gates, the palace, and the king's garden. Surely it is interesting and significant that the effect of completeness and unity in this play is brought about by a logical scheme which would suggest to the western reader that the dramatist was acquainted with that doctrine of 'unity of time' which meant so much to the sixteenth-and seventeenth-century dramatists who thought they were following Aristotle's precepts. Yet it is certain that our dramatist knew nothing of western doctrine or practice. U Pon Nya is only carrying out what U Kyin U laid down as the aim of dramatic technique, namely the logical and smooth unfolding of the plot; and in *The Water-seller* this has

led him to something which approximates to the observance of the 'unities' of time and place as well as of action.

In the grouping of the characters, U Pon Nya shows his greatness as a dramatist, and gives an impression of beauty of form and completeness to the play. The first scene begins with the prince and the two water-sellers. The attention of the audience is drawn and concentrated on these three from the beginning. When their characters have been portrayed in part, other persons are introduced to the audience. But the attention of the audience is not allowed to waver from the three. Others are mere figures that serve as background. They are allowed to say so little that we can scarcely even call them minor characters. The three characters are well portrayed, the man water-seller the most fully of the three. He is the central figure, and on one side of him we have the king, admiring the water-seller, liking him; on the other side we have the woman, loving him. As a result the play gives the impression of a symmetrical structure, with the man as the centre, the king and the woman as wings, and other persons of the play as background. In the last scene also, U Pon Nya shows his mastery in grouping the figures on the stage to give an effect of beauty of structure. When the king and his followers arrive at the garden, the king and the crown prince occupy the centre of the stage, and we have the princess with the ladies on one side, and the courtiers on the other. When the climax of the play—the attempt of the prince on the life of the king—is reached, other figures are absent, because the attention of the audience has to be concentrated on the prince alone. When the climax is over, again two distinct groups of characters enter on different sides. At the end, the water-sellers leave on one side, and the king and the courtiers on the other, the centre of the stage being left empty.

*Paduma* shows that U Pon Nya had not learnt to portray character. With regard to the princess in that play, he was trying to convince the audience that there was no logic or reason in a woman, and that she had no character as she was merely a creature of desire. Therefore he had no reason to dwell upon the princess but this very fact should have caused him to portray *Paduma's* character, which he failed to do. This seems to prove that he only learnt to portray character through the experience gained from his first play. In *The Water-seller*, he is a master of that art. He wants the audience to concentrate its interest on the man water-seller, but he sketches the other two in convincing detail. The king is a philosopher and sincere

friend, and one can appreciate his treatment of the water-seller. He is a conscientious king, but his place is really the study, and he finds even one day of kingship tiresome. He would have liked the water-seller to share the responsibility of ruling the kingdom, but he could appreciate his desire to seek the peace of the forest. He is human in his attitude towards religion; he wishes to be a Buddha one day; he believes that the monastery alone can offer real peace; he finds his crown burdensome; and he admires the water-seller for being able to leave the luxuries of the palace for the simple life of a hermit; but he himself cannot leave his palace and power, for, being but an ordinary mortal, he loves comfort and wealth and power. The woman water-seller is an ordinary woman, honest, charming, lovable. She earns her living scrupulously; she is poor but honest. She appreciates the sterling qualities in the other water-seller, and falls in love with him. She trusts him, but womanlike, she wants the marriage to be celebrated according to convention. Luxury and power do not change her character. Politics do not interest her. A lovable woman as a water-seller, she remains lovable as a princess, and therefore the ladies at the court cry their hearts out when she leaves them, though they have served her but one afternoon. She is a woman above all, and she loves the man water-seller for himself alone; he may change his social status, he may be a water-seller, a prince, a monk, but he remains forever her man, and she will follow him everywhere. She has the utmost faith in him, and what he does is right to her. When he wishes to go to the forest, she does not persuade him to stay. Politics and religion and philosophy play a very small part in her life; she just follows the water-seller to the forest, because she loves him and cannot stay without him.

The portrayal of the man water-seller constitutes a real advance in Burmese drama. It is a study in character development. U Kyin U and his precursors had studied character, but in their works the character was fixed from the beginning to the end, and it did not develop before the eyes of the audience. We have seen how brilliantly Parpahein was portrayed by U Kyin U; but throughout, he remained the same Parpahein that we knew when the play began. The man water-seller is very poor, but his character is such that he can keep himself cheerful and quite contented. Honesty and buoyancy of temperament make him happy. His outlook as to wealth is very narrow; he has no other ambition but to earn a few coppers more. He cheerfully and frankly woos his bride. When

through good fortune he is given a princely sum of money, his regard for the silver halfpenny acquired through industry and thrift, and his love for the woman remain. In the hour of his acquisition of half the kingdom, he does not forget either his lover or his halfpenny. However, he soon loses his cheerfulness through having to fill his office with dignity and ability; the crown prince is no longer the laughing water-seller, indulging in mock-heroics, laughing unashamed at his own poverty. Wealth and power do not always make one happy and cheerful. To the previously contented water-seller ambition comes to disturb his peace of mind. He is next only to the king, but he wants to be king now—he, who was contented before with a half-penny hidden safely away. His greed and ambition tempt him, to kill his friend and king, who is responsible for making him the crown prince. Fortunately, his old sense of honesty and gratitude still remain. The good and evil in him fight, and U Pon Nya gives us a fine picture of the struggle in the mind of the water-seller. In the end, the good wins. If the character of a person is essentially good, in the end, in spite of all temptations, the good in him will carry him through, just as the water-seller's character finally triumphs over ambition and greed that result from wealth and power. The king offers him the whole kingdom, he has but to say 'yes', and from being the lowest in the country, he will become the highest. But he refuses the offer. He has tasted both poverty and wealth and in the end he chooses poverty—the poverty and peace of a hermit's life. He has the courage to act according to his convictions, and we can but respect and admire his final action.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4. *WIZAYA*

The story of this play is taken with slight modifications from a semi-religious work on the history of Buddhism in Ceylon, which is classed in the same category as a *Jataka*. In the original not only the history of Ceylon, but also some account of the history of the kingdom in India from which the island was colonized, was given. U Pon Nya, however, begins only at the point where the colonists leave their mother country, and ends his play at the point where a dynasty is assured to Ceylon.

The king is holding his court when he hears cries for help. On inquiry he learns that his elder son, Wizaya, has long been in the

<sup>1</sup> A translation of the play is given in appendix vi.

practice of roaming about the country with his seven hundred retainers, robbing and otherwise ill-treating the people. The ministers have been afraid to report the truth to the king, and the people in despair have come to cry for help under the very windows of the palace. The king summons his son before him, and asks him whether the report of his misdeeds is true. The prince, as answer, begs the king to punish the ministers as they did not report his misdeeds before. In anger at this impertinent retort, the king orders that the prince be executed at once. The queen begs for mercy, but the prince tells her, in gentle words, not to be anxious as he is quite prepared to die. The king relents, but as the prince refuses to give an undertaking to respect the law, the ministers, supported by the people, demand that the prince and his seven hundred men should be put to death at once. The queen begs the king and ministers to give to the prince and his men a chance of saving themselves provided there is no possibility of their ever returning to the kingdom. In deference to her wishes, it is decided to put Wizaya, his men, and their families on rafts, and send them floating southwards on the ocean. The prince bids farewell to his parents, and his gentle and dignified tone shows that he is no longer an irresponsible young prince; not fear of death, but a sense of responsibility and duty towards his followers has changed him. By fine seamanship and organization, he safely navigates the rafts until they reach Ceylon.

The prince decides to settle down and found a kingdom there, provided such a course of action is possible. The king of the gods sees from his heavenly throne the arrival of the prince on the island, and realizes that Wizaya is destined to spread Buddhism and Ceylon is to be a stronghold of the religion. As a guardian of the religion, the king of the gods is bound to help the prince as much as possible, and his help is urgently needed because the island is inhabited by demons and ogres. He summons his chief minister and requests him to go and help the prince. The minister changes himself into a hermit, and gives the prince some religious charms and warns him that there are demons on the island. The seeming hermit bids farewell and returns to the country of the gods. The king of the ogres and demons, who are well organized and have supernatural powers, has a niece, who is in the habit of wandering along the coast in search of shipwrecked sailors to eat. She traps sailors in this way: she changes herself into a hermitess, and then sits beside a pond; her maid changes herself into a dog, and makes herself visible to the



sailors, who follow her, thinking that the dog will lead them to some human habitation. But the dog leads them to the seeming hermitess, who invites them to have a drink out of the pond; as they bend down to drink, the ogresses attack them from behind. This information regarding the method of trapping sailors is given to the audience through a conversation between the princess and her maid. The maid is sent by the ogre-princess to play the usual trick if she should be fortunate enough to find some human beings. In the next scene, we find Wizaya anxious and troubled in mind, for some followers he had sent to explore the island have not returned. He decides to go in search of them himself, as he thinks that there is danger ahead and does not wish any of his remaining followers to take an unknown risk. He finds the hermitess, who at first succeeds in deceiving him. But she falls in love with him, and her loving words, unbecoming from the lips of a holy woman, make him suspicious. By threatening her with instant death, he forces her to confess that she is an ogre-princess, and responsible for the disappearance of his men, who are still alive as prisoners, as their god-given charms protect them from the fangs of the ogresses. The ogre-princess restores the men to Wizaya. In the original story, the prince guessed that the seeming hermitess was in reality an ogress through his powers of observation, whereas U Pon Nya makes the ogress divulge her secret through her loving words. The ogress, who has now assumed human form, appears very beautiful, and Wizaya falls in love with her. They return to the coast, and the exiles are taken by the ogre-princess to a suitable place inland where they encamp for the night. Meanwhile, the ogre-king, oblivious of the arrival of Wizaya and his men, is making arrangements with his ministers to meet his bride in state. She is arriving from another ogre-kingdom at midnight, and the king decides to take all his followers in flying chariots and hold a great feast in honour of her arrival. In the middle of the night, Wizaya is awakened by noises of revelry, and he inquires of the ogre-princess the meaning of the sounds. The princess tells him that she is the niece of the king of the ogres, who are now celebrating the arrival of the queen-to-be, in flying chariots. Wizaya points out that human beings and ogres cannot live on the same island, and war between them is inevitable. He wishes to fight the ogres at once, when they are unprepared and ignorant of his arrival. The princess points out how powerful the ogres are, but the prince is determined to fight at any cost.

She decides on helping him, so as to show her love for him and to ensure his safety. She tells the prince that she will go to the feast in the sky, and when she is near her uncle, she will make a noise. She asks him to shoot his arrow towards the point in the sky from where her voice will come. She will have left the feast before the arrow reaches its mark, and it will hit the ogre-king. As the driving and control of the flying chariots depend on him, this will cause all the chariots to fall from the sky, hurling the riders to death. The ogre-princess leaves Wizaya, and soon after her voice is heard in the sky and the prince shoots. The ogre-king falls down dead, pierced by the arrow, and cries of pain and panic are heard off-stage. The princess enters and tells the prince that all the ogres in Ceylon are dead, but there are still some on the neighbouring isles. She advises the prince to wear the armour of the dead king, and his followers that of the other ogres as the armour will give them power and protection against all enemies, spirit or human. Wizaya and his followers settle down on the island, and soon organize a thriving state. They are responsible and serious citizens now, and because of the fortunate and miraculous way in which they have succeeded in founding the new state, they hold that they are destined to establish Buddhism firmly on the island, and to spread it to other lands. The prince is crowned king, and an embassy is sent to the mainland of India to seek a princess to be the new king's queen, and also to seek her country's alliance, as such an alliance is necessary for the new kingdom to be recognized by other countries. Some months pass. The ogre-princess now has a son and a daughter as a result of her morganatic marriage with Wizaya. The embassy finds a suitable alliance, and the king of the allied state agrees to give his daughter in marriage to Wizaya. He summons his daughter to his presence, and requests her to depart for Ceylon with the embassy. She is afraid and weeps, but when the king points out to her that duty to her kingdom calls to her to go, she agrees. She arrives at the coast of Ceylon, and when the news reaches Wizaya, he asks the ogre-princess to leave the kingdom without delay, because as he must be married to the newly arrived princess at once, the ogress's presence in the palace will be dangerous to the peace and well-being of the kingdom. The ogress cries, and then reproaches Wizaya as a traitor to honour and gratitude, and as a faithless husband. The prince speaks of his great love for her, but says that, as he owes a duty to his kingdom and the religion, he has no choice but to marry the human princess. He points out that a

country which has an ogress as queen will never be recognized by others. The ogress decides to leave Wizaya, but she wishes to take her children with her. But the king also wishes to have them always with him, for he wants some memento, for she alone is his love. However, as the ogress refuses to go without her children, the king has to comply with her wishes, and she and the children depart from Ceylon and disappear in the neighbouring islands.

When the next scene begins, we learn that some years have gone by, but the king is still without an heir. His people beg him to send an embassy to his father, asking for Wizaya's younger brother, so that he may be appointed crown prince of Ceylon. As both the king and the people agree that the establishment of a dynasty in Ceylon is vital to the interests of the religion, the embassy is sent. The ambassadors find that the old king, Wizaya's father, has died and the brother is now king. Though he is overjoyed to hear about his brother and wishes to help Ceylon and the spread of Buddhism, he holds that he owes a greater duty to his own kingdom and therefore cannot become the crown prince. He, however, gives his eldest son to the embassy, impressing upon the young prince the duty that he, the prince, owes to the religion, to his uncle Wizaya, and to Ceylon. The prince promises to be a worthy ruler. He arrives in Ceylon, and his abilities satisfy his uncle and the people. Soon after, Wizaya and his queen retire to the monastery, and the nephew becomes king. In the next scene, we see the king of another country in a dilemma. Princes from different kingdoms are demanding the hand of his only daughter in marriage, and the king realizes that no matter who gets the princess, other suitors will declare war on him. In despair, he puts his daughter on a raft and sends her floating southwards on the ocean. The princely suitors try to swim to the raft, but they are all unsuccessful. The raft arrives at an island near Ceylon, and an ogre finds the princess and makes love to her. As she refuses his advances, he shuts her up in a cave. The guardian-goddess of the ocean appears on the scene, and by threatening the ogre with divine punishment, secures the release of the princess. The goddess puts back the maiden on the raft, and tells her that gentle ocean breezes will drive the raft until it reaches Ceylon; it will stop at that part of the coast where the king's garden meets the sea; the king will find her, fall in love with her, and make her queen; a glorious dynasty will result from the marriage, and under the patronage of its kings, Buddhism will shine forth and

spread to other countries from Ceylon. As foretold by the goddess, the raft reaches the island, and the king finds the princess. They fall in love, and amid the acclamation of his people, preparations are made for the royal marriage.

Though the story is on the whole identical with the original work, the atmosphere of U Pon Nya's play is entirely different. Throughout the play, the audience is made to feel that the welfare of the kingdom of Ceylon is the one thing that matters, and unless and until such welfare is assured, the story cannot end. The kingdom is really the hero, and Wizaya and others are merely instruments for the good of the kingdom. A dynasty must be established, and the play ends only when it has been established. There is also an atmosphere of an all-conquering destiny. The persons in the play are destined to contribute their share towards the establishment of Ceylon as a kingdom, for on it depends the maintenance and spread of the religion. Duty and destiny are given as the same thing in the play, and against them everybody is powerless to struggle. The realization of this fact causes the chief characters of the play to suppress all personal feelings and desires. Duty and destiny must be served at all costs. The moment the erring Wizaya realizes his duty towards his followers, he changes his character. Later he gives up the ogre-princess, whom he really loves, and the two children, because he must fulfil his destiny and obtain for Ceylon the full status of a sovereign state. The princess, who later becomes Wizaya's queen, does not wish to leave her own country to go to a foreign land, and to take an unknown king as consort, but the moment she is made to realize that duty and destiny demand that she must depart for Ceylon, she dries her tears and embarks on her voyage. His brother wishes to see again Wizaya whom he dearly loves, but he refrains from leaving his own kingdom, for he thinks that his duty towards it is more important than his longing to see his brother. He loves his son, but sends him to his uncle, for Wizaya needs an heir. This son, Wizaya's nephew, from the few glimpses of him that the audience has, is shown to be coldly efficient, without any sign of personal feeling or emotion. Other characters in the play have to sacrifice their personal desires to duty or destiny, but this prince promises to be the most successful and most willing servant of the kingdom. The ogre-princess is the most human of all the royal personages in the play. To her, duty does not mean anything, and she has no idea of what destiny means to Wizaya and his kingdom. All she knows is love, and for that love she sacrifices

her own people and her own country. To the end she fails to understand or appreciate *Wizaya's* conception of duty and destiny. In contrast to the kings in the play who can send their sons and daughters to unknown lands for reasons of state, her children matter greatly to her, she loves them even more than she loves *Wizaya*, and she refuses to go away without them. She is a total failure in state affairs, for she is the most human of them all, and she refuses to be a cold instrument of state. Her tragedy lies in the fact that unconsciously she is also the servant of that destiny which *Wizaya* and his kind willingly serve. She is the chief instrument by which the kingdom of Ceylon, destined to spread the religion to other lands, is firmly established. As soon as she has served its purpose, destiny sends her away in wretchedness. She has served the kingdom well, but her further presence in it will be against its interests, so she is exiled and forced to go back to the ogres, whose chief kingdom she has betrayed. And no one among the people she has saved at the cost of her own ogre-kingdom raises a finger to protect her from injustice.

The play is very artistic. The atmosphere of the ruthlessness of destiny is very well done. The theme makes the play something new and original. In many ways, *Wizaya* introduces new developments in Burmese drama, and in some ways it is a breakaway from U Kyin U's dramatic theory and practice. It will again be considered in detail in the last section of this chapter, where an attempt will be made to estimate the achievement and importance of U Pon Nya.<sup>1</sup>

### 5. *KAWTHALA*

This is the only play of U Pon Nya which has an original story. The king of Bayanathi, who is emperor of all the neighbouring kingdoms, has just succeeded to the throne on the death of his father. To pay homage to him have come all his vassal-kings, except *Kawthala*, who refuses to come, though he is king of but a small state, for the new king has been a page at *Kawthala's* court. *Kawthala* realizes that his behaviour is unwise, and that the might of Bayanathi can easily crush him at once, but his pride prevents him from kneeling before the young emperor, who lately knelt to him as a page. Bayanathi sends an embassy to demand homage, pointing out that in the event of the countries going to war, *Kawthala* has no chance whatever

<sup>1</sup> Extracts from this play are given in appendix vii.

to stand against the combined forces of Bayanathi and its vassal-kings. The king of Bayanathi is not keen on war; he is certain of victory, he is reluctant to shed blood, but he cannot encourage any sign of rebellion in the empire. Kawthala's ministers beg him not to be defiant, but to swallow his pride in the interests of his kingdom. However, he wishes to go to war, and because his pride has undermined his wisdom he even thinks that there are chances of his winning the struggle. The ministers give way in the end, the embassy is refused admission to the city, and war is declared against Bayanathi. A few days later, Kawthala's city is besieged by overwhelming forces, but the emperor, who is still reluctant to shed blood, offers peace and full pardon, provided Kawthala comes and pays homage. The ministers of Kawthala demand that he should accept the offered terms of peace and save the city and its people. Kawthala refuses to surrender himself, but he decides to commit suicide so that the ministers can make peace after his death. He bids a tender farewell to his queen, who has been his consort since youth. She wishes to die with him, but he persuades her to live for the sake of his unborn heir, for she is pregnant. The ministers surrender the city after his death, and offer the queen to the emperor as a token of homage. The king of Bayanathi, being magnanimous, grants a full pardon, and allows the vanquished state to retain its status as a kingdom, he himself to be its king, and Kawthala's ministers to be retained in their offices. The king begs Kawthala's queen to marry him, for the marriage will increase his prestige and power, as she is famed and beloved in all countries. She begs leave to remain in her own country in peace, wishing not to have any authority or power, and desiring nothing else but peace. The king presses his suit and she agrees in the end, for after all she is really a prisoner in his hands. They are married soon afterwards in Bayanathi. Months pass, and a son is born to the queen. She loves the child, and memories of her lost love, Kawthala, increase the love for the child, but she decides to put it to death at once. For she realizes that her old kingdom would rebel to put the prince on the throne, and the possibility of such a rebellion would cause the king to kill the child. She thinks it is better for the little prince to die before he has learnt to love life, and to die without the torture of an execution. As only herself and her faithful lady-in-waiting know of the birth, the killing of the child cannot be discovered. The lady-in-waiting goes to the cemetery, according to her instructions, and leaves the child among the graves. Kawthala is now a tree-god,

and a first-lieutenant of the king of the gods. He desires revenge on the king of Bayanathi, but still more does he desire the restoration of his own line to the throne of his lost kingdom. Observing that the little prince is left among the graves to die, he by his godly powers causes two goatherds who are near by, a man and wife, to go to that particular part of the cemetery in search of pasture. They are overjoyed at finding the child, for they have been longing for a son. The tree-god then shows himself, and tells them his history. He requests them to put the child in a magic pond in the forest for one night, because in the morning the child will be changed into a youth of sixteen years. In the next scene, the prince emerges from the pond a grown-up youth, but he does not know who or what he is, until the tree-god enlightens him. He gives the prince a magic bow, and impresses upon him the necessity of regaining the throne and restoring the dynasty, but the prince will have to bide his time and act for himself when the time comes. The young man promises to follow the god's advice faithfully. He becomes a goatherd, and is quite happy with the couple who have adopted him. The man becomes his constant friend and companion, and together they wander from pasture to pasture. The prince, contented, has no immediate plans towards fulfilling his promise to the tree-god. One morning he and his companion fall asleep on a grassy mound while the goats graze. The god of love now enters, and his duty is to watch the destiny of lovers. The prince is destined to love the daughter of the ogre-king, who rules the ogre-country that is separated from Bayanathi by the forest, where the goatherds are. The god hides the goats, and causes a trail of their foot-marks to begin from the grassy mound and end abruptly in the garden of the ogre-princess, who plays there attended only by a maid of honour. The prince and his companion, upon waking, suppose the goats to have wandered away of their own accord, and follow the trail until they lose it in the garden, where they throw themselves on the ground and fall asleep through fatigue. The ogre-princess, on finding them, falls in love with the prince, who wakes up, and proposes marriage. When she points out that her father is certain to withhold assent, the prince suggests elopement, to which she agrees; so they run away, while the maid of honour hastens to report the matter to the ogre-king, who thereupon sets out in haste in pursuit of the lovers. He finds them resting just outside the gates of Bayanathi; whereupon he tries to kill the prince, who, however, aims the god-given bow at him, and would kill him to end all danger of

interference; but the princess persuades him to spare her father. The ogre-king, then departing, enters the palace of the king of Bayanathi, and by right of the treaty of alliance between the two kingdoms, requests the king to capture and punish the daughter and her lover. So the lovers are surprised and taken prisoners. The prince is put on the scaffold, and the princess is chained to it. They are to be executed a few days later. The tree-god, through his supernatural vision, sees what is happening, and rushes to the palace of Bayanathi, where he makes known the facts regarding the young man, and the king and queen hurry to the place of execution. The young prince, who is wailing, recounts to them his story, not knowing that they are connected with the events of his life. The play ends happily, with the prince and princess saved from the scaffold. Whether they are happily married and Kawthala's dynasty is restored or whether they all retire to the monastery is uncertain.

This play is very unsatisfactory. U Pon Nya wrote it in imitation of the *Daywagonban* of U Kyin U. Though he was at the height of his fame as a dramatist after *Wizaya*, many critics maintained that U Pon Nya could not write in the same clear style as U Kyin U; they held that his language was too flowery and therefore less suitable for the drama, and that he had too few dramatic scenes as compared to U Kyin U. So U Pon Nya wrote this new play under the direct orders of the king, who at once submitted it to those critics, to be read side by side with *Daywagonban*. The critics declared that *Kawthala* was as good as *Daywagonban*. They were wrong, however, and *Kawthala* is unworthy of either U Pon Nya or U Kyin U. Though U Pon Nya invented the story, his hands were tied, because he had to follow the style of *Daywagonban*. That was why the incident of the ogre-king being quelled by the god-given bow was put in, spoiling the unity of action, for that incident has little to do with the main theme. The ending, too, had to be almost the same as in *Daywagonban*. The climax and anticlimax, the tying of the hero and heroine to the scaffold, ready for execution, and their subsequent rescue through the help of the tree-god are similar to the tying of the hermit prince and the princesses to the scaffold, ready for execution, and their subsequent rescue through the help of the king of the gods. This half-forced imitation of U Kyin U's play explains why *Kawthala* begins so well and yet ends so unsatisfactorily. The earlier part where Kawthala, because of his foolish but human pride, struggles against Bayanathi, is very dramatic and interesting, but after his death, the plot deteriorates.



The play, however, is not without importance. It has one or two new developments in dramatic technique, and like all U Pon Nya's plays except *Waythandaya*, it has some reference to the political intrigues of the time. It also gives us some idea as to the attitude of U Pon Nya towards U Kyin U and the romantic drama. All these topics will be dealt with in the last section of this chapter.<sup>1</sup>

#### 6. *WAYTHANDAYA*

This play was written by U Pon Nya in compliance with the request of the court ladies, and the orders of the king, which he received after the first performance of *Paduma*. It was by way of apology for his satire against women in that play, but the apology was no longer necessary, for meanwhile the portrayal of the woman water-seller and of the ogre-princess, Wizaya's lover, had shown the real attitude of the dramatist towards women.

The story is taken from a *Jataka*, but U Pon Nya greatly modifies it. The *Waythandaya Jataka* has been the best known of the Birth Stories since U Awbatha wrote his version. The original story was thus. Waythandaya, crown prince of a kingdom, was a great giver of alms, and if anyone asked anything of him, he gave it. Knowing his character, wicked Brahmins took advantage of the charitable prince, and at last, after he had given away the luckiest white elephant in the kingdom, the king and his people decided to exile him with his family. So Waythandaya, his wife Ma-di, and their little son and daughter were sent to live in a thick forest, but the king, anxious for their safety, placed a great hunter, with his famous hunting dogs, as guard, to watch all comers to the forest. The prince was not only exiled but degraded, and he was not allowed to have servants and followers. But Ma-di proved a good housewife, and looked after her family well. Now in a neighbouring kingdom, there lived a great glutton, Brahmin Zuzaka, and he had married a young wife, who wanted him to die, so that she could have all his money. Knowing his miserliness, she pointed out that he could get two young slaves without any payment, if he would but go and ask Waythandaya to give him his children. She expected him to be killed by the hunter at the entrance to the forest, but the cunning Brahmin, by pretending to be a messenger from Waythandaya's father bringing good news to the exiles, gained permission from the hunter to enter the forest. In the absence of the princess, who had gone in search of fruit, the Brahmin

<sup>1</sup> Extracts from this play are given in appendix viii.

got Waythandaya to give up the children to him. Waythandaya was stricken with remorse, but he could do nothing as the Brahmin had gone. When Ma-di returned to the hut, and found the children gone, she fainted.

Meanwhile, the Brahmin, getting out of the forest, was made by the gods to lose his way, so that he found himself at Waythandaya's city, where he was arrested and taken before the king. As the prince had given the children to the Brahmin, the king was bound by honour to respect the gift, and not to molest the Brahmin, to whom, thereupon, he gave a palace with all royal honours in exchange for the children. The Brahmin soon choked himself to death with over-eating, as he was unused to sumptuous banquets. The return of the children to the city awoke in the hearts of the people memories of Waythandaya and Ma-di, whom they once loved and respected greatly, and they now begged the king to restore Waythandaya to his office as crown prince. Amidst great rejoicings the king and the people went to the forest and brought back the prince and princess, while the whole world acclaimed Ma-di as a noble heroine, for the hardships she voluntarily underwent for love of Waythandaya. The story had been dramatized often before U Pon Nya, and as has been stated, one of U Kyin U's lost plays was on Waythandaya. Though no *Waythandaya* play before U Pon Nya has come down to us, we know from oral tradition among stage-folk that the Brahmin villain was a favourite comic character, and the rough treatment he suffered at the hands of his shrewish young wife provoked great laughter. The Brahmin was hated and despised, yet feared, by people in Burma, until about the time of U Kyin U, and the Brahmin of those days was comparable to the Jew of Elizabethan times. He was an Indian, a foreigner, tolerated and feared for his knowledge of astrology, and through that knowledge, managing to survive the fear and hostility of the people. In the prose work of U Awbatha, through which Waythandaya's story became first popular, the character of the Brahmin was not comic, but it became so in the earlier interludes. We do not know for certain what the treatment of the Brahmin was in the hands of U Kyin U, but very likely he was not a comic character, for U Kyin U did not introduce any comic characters into his other plays, and in *Mahaw* the Brahmin Kaywut, Mahaw's enemy, who would doubtless have been a comic character in the hands of U Kyin U's precursors and contemporaries, was treated by him as a serious character. U Pon Nya, although he

was doubtless acquainted with the stock character of the Brahmin and with U Kyin U's play, which was extant in his time, does not follow the earlier dramatists, and he greatly modifies the story. Presuming a knowledge of the story by the audience, he begins his play at the point where Waythandaya is already in exile with his family. The opening is a comic scene between two hermits in the forest. These hermits, who are U Pon Nya's own invention, have nothing to do with the story except that, in the course of their conversation, we learn that Waythandaya and his family are living as exiles in another part of the forest. In the second scene, we see a tree-god and a goddess. The god tells the goddess that Zuzaka has succeeded in getting the children and that it is the duty of the gods in the forest to look after them. They decide to follow Zuzaka, and become visible to the children in the form of their parents, but not visible to the Brahmin. When they have departed, Ma-di enters, crying, for she has forebodings of disaster. She sees the hut from a distance, but the children and Waythandaya do not come running to meet her as they usually do, and when she calls there is no answer. She faints, and Waythandaya comes weeping and, having nursed her back to consciousness, confesses what he has done. Grief-stricken they decide that they must wait patiently for better days, as it is too late to follow the Brahmin. In the third scene, the guardian of the forest, the hunter, enters. It is unfortunate that the last few lines of the play are missing, but from oral and written accounts of the play, we know that the children are saved. It is legitimate perhaps to assume that the hunter finds Zuzaka with the children and takes them all to the king, with happy results. No other ending seems possible because (1) the entry of the hunter, marshalling his hounds to look around the forest, clearly shows that U Pon Nya intends him to contribute some incident of importance to the main action: and (2) as only a few lines are missing, it is impossible that U Pon Nya could have crowded into so limited a space all the concluding events of the original story.

In this play U Pon Nya has very little interest in the narration of the story. Perhaps the story was so well known that it would have been pointless to pay much attention to it. He is intent upon doing three things: to make the audience laugh, to make it weep, and to show that all human beings, whether rich or poor, high or low, religious or otherwise, suffer the same through the loss of loved ones. In the first scene, which is entirely comic, the humour is genuine, and not coarse as in *Kawthala*. There is also a gentle satire against monks

and hermits who became so only to earn an easy living, but the satire is not bitter, for those vagabonds were quite harmless and amusing, at least in those days. The second scene is pure pathos. The pathos begins with the god and goddess speaking about the pathetic misfortunes and sufferings of Ma-di and the children, and it gradually increases in intensity, until the climax is reached when the princess faints, and Waythandaya weeps with her in his arms. U Pon Nya makes them entirely human, and in their sorrow, they behave and suffer the same as ordinary men and women, although they are prince and princess, and intensely religious. The third scene returns to humour, but the humour is restrained, as otherwise it might interfere with the course of the main action in the scene. The comic spirit of the play is finely conceived, and also original, for U Pon Nya rejects stock types of comic characters and does not even raise a smile for his Zuzaka.

To the critics of the decadent period, *Waythandaya* was U Pon Nya's masterpiece as far as dramatic technique alone was concerned. They held that the play conformed to the rules of their own drama. The conformity is there, but it is not surprising, for the imitation of this play and *Wizaya* by dramatists less gifted than U Pon Nya, contributed much to the rise of the decadent drama. This topic is discussed in the next section, and also in the chapter on the decadent period.<sup>1</sup>

## 7. THE CHARACTERISTICS AND ACHIEVEMENT OF U PON NYA

Since U Pon Nya established himself as a great dramatist through the composition of *The Water-seller*, it has been the custom of Burmese critics to compare and contrast him with U Kyin U, invariably supposing them to represent two entirely different types of the drama. Doubtless there is an essential difference between the two, but it must not be forgotten that the history of Burmese drama shows a continuous development, and that U Pon Nya was the heir of U Kyin U's experiments and achievements. However, the best way to appreciate their qualities is to compare and contrast them.

U Pon Nya was a courtier, and he wrote his plays primarily for production at court, but he did not in any way revive the old court drama as established by the *Rama* play and its imitators, nor did he introduce a new court drama comparable to the old. Since the final fusion of the court drama and the 'people's' drama by the time of

<sup>1</sup> An extract from the play is given in appendix ix.

U Kyin U, the plays produced at court were plays which had been produced outside. During the troublesome period of the two Anglo-Burmese wars of 1824 and 1852-6, although palace dramatic performances were rare because of the fact that the court was in disgrace and disunion, the courtiers read and studied U Kyin U's plays. As has been stated, the acceptance and popularity of U Kyin U as the greatest dramatist by both the court and the people prevented any possibility of the old court drama being revived. But there were two other factors which acted against such revival: first, since the time of U Kyin U, the production of a play even at court was entirely in the hands of professional actors, and so U Pon Nya had to conform to the practice and tradition of those who would produce his plays; second, the fact that U Pon Nya was a realist prevented him from ever writing artificial court plays of the old type.

U Kyin U was a romanticist. The world depicted in *Daywagoban* and *Parpahein* was a world of fantasy and romance. Princes fought and struggled, heroes accomplished valiant deeds, and gods and demons and animals shared adventures with princes and princesses. Even in *Mahaw*, in spite of the absence of demons and gods, the atmosphere of the play, with its bombastic speeches and its love-scene between the magpie and parrot, was romantic. In U Pon Nya's plays, the atmosphere of romance is missing. He does not use animals as characters, except in *Paduma*, where the crocodile contributes to the main action by saving the prince, and by driving home the moral that even animals are wiser than women; but he satirizes the uncontrolled employment of animals as characters, by ironically making the crocodile say learned and serious words which appear ridiculous in the mouth of an animal, and he is half apologetic about using the crocodile, for he makes it say in the address to the orchestra after *Paduma* has been taken back to his city: 'I have come only to make you smile. Let that smile be increased into laughter, while I return to my forest. . . .' The difference in the use of supernatural characters also contributes to the difference in atmosphere. In U Kyin U's work the gods and demons were in keeping with the romantic atmosphere. On the whole they lacked seriousness of purpose, joining in the struggles of human beings through their own love of romance and adventure. They appeared so petty in the way they fought and quarrelled; the tree-god in *Daywagoban* indulged in undignified bragging when *Daywagoban* accused him of having stolen his princess, and it was childish and silly of *Daywagoban* to indulge

in trivial threats and displays of temper, when he could have used his god-given and demon-given powers in conquering the world or spreading the religion. However, the character of the king of the gods in *Daywagonban* was more interesting. He was not concerned with the petty squabbles of the other characters of the play. The guardian of justice and religion, he interfered only when innocent persons were in danger of being executed, and no other way of saving them was possible. He was reluctant to show himself and take an active part even when he had to save the hermit. At first he contented himself with sending his lieutenants to use their power to cause thunder and lightning. Only when they had failed to have any effect on Daywagonban, did he himself take an active part and use his own supernatural powers. This king of the gods, different from other supernatural characters of U Kyin U, was akin to U Pon Nya's spirits and gods; that was why he seemed so out of place in the fantastic world of *Daywagonban*. U Pon Nya portrays his supernatural characters as belonging to a world other than ours, but as being interested in the human world. Their interest is not the result of idle curiosity or of mere love of adventure, but arises from some serious purpose. Guardians of the religion and servants of destiny, they interfere because it is their duty to interfere, and when they do so, they are careful that their help or hindrance should be as limited as possible. When they have to show themselves, they usually do so in the guise of human beings, and they do not appear at all unless their help is needed. That is why no supernatural characters appear in *The Water-seller* and *Paduma*; the crocodile in *Paduma* is not supernatural, he is just an ordinary animal, unlike the *naga* and *galón* of *Daywagonban*. In *Wizaya*, the king of the gods and his followers are servants of destiny, and they have to see that human beings fulfil their duties as set by destiny. But they interfere as little as possible. When the king of the gods sends one of his lieutenants to give protective charms to Wizaya, the lieutenant does so only in the guise of a human hermit. When the guardian-goddess of the ocean saves the princess, she does not take her to Wizaya's nephew herself, but gently guides the raft by means of ocean-breezes to the king's garden, leaving him to discover his consort as if by chance. The ogres of *Wizaya* are not comparable to the quarrelsome and boastful ogres of *Daywagonban*. The ogre-king is shown to be a worthy monarch, but he and his kingdom have to be sacrificed in order that the

religion may be firmly established in Ceylon. Duty and destiny bind the ogres and the gods to the human world, and through that connexion, they seem real to us, though they belong actually to a spiritual world of their own, and through that connexion, they could come into U Pon Nya's plays without destroying the atmosphere of realism. U Pon Nya does not have to create a fantastic world to accommodate his spirits, as U Kyin U had to. Even in *Kawthala*, written in imitation of *Daywagonban*, the tree-god, reincarnation of Kawthala, is different from the tree-god of U Kyin U's play. U Pon Nya's tree-god does not indulge in boastful speeches and displays of temper. He is serious, not petty. His duty is to restore his dynasty, but he interferes as little as possible. He gives a magic bow to his son, but he impresses upon the young man the necessity of acting for himself; U Pon Nya's gods can help, but the initiative must come from human beings. In that play, too, we find the love-god acting as a servant of destiny; he has to arrange a meeting between the destined lovers, but he has to act as if the arranged meeting were by chance. And when the young prince is put on the gallows, the tree-god has to seek the help of his old enemy, for even gods are powerless against the all-conquering destiny. With all these differences between the supernatural characters of the two dramatists, it is not improbable that U Pon Nya owes something to the king of the gods of *Daywagonban* for his conception of the supernatural.

In the portrayal of character U Pon Nya excels U Kyin U, mainly because he is the heir of all the experiments of the earlier dramatist. He interests the audience in the development of character in the course of the play; *The Water-seller* is a fine study in character development, and in *Wizaya* the effect of a sense of duty and destiny on the characters is well shown. As this topic has been discussed in earlier sections, further discussion is unnecessary. U Kyin U had not portrayed any developed female character, perhaps because the dramatic portrayal of character was then quite new and he had his hands full in experimenting in the depiction of male characters. U Pon Nya, coming after U Kyin U, could turn to the portrayal of female characters, and it is even possible that he was forced to do so through his audience clamouring for it. The ogre-princess of *Wizaya*, the woman water-seller and Ma-di are well conceived, and even Paduma's princess is a fine achievement in some ways. In the portrayal of common people, U Pon Nya shows that he is a true realist. U Kyin U showed the possibilities of portraying such people in

*Mahaw*, where the leader of Mahaw's men and a woman attendant on the queen-mother quarrelled and argued and hurled insults at each other. It is likely that that realistic and humorous scene taught U Pon Nya something. As he was very famous as a writer of humorous satires against various types of people, humorous satire naturally comes into some of his plays. In *Waythandaya* the roguish but rather charming hermits who lived on the credulity of simple villagers are well satirized. In *Kawothala* the goatherd is a typical countryman of U Pon Nya's time, good-natured, humorous, indulging in ribald jokes, easygoing, yet at the back of it all, having a shrewd common sense and the utmost loyalty. U Pon Nya has often been criticized for the coarse jokes of his goatherd, but his love of realism and his interest in all types of human character, make him portray the goatherd as he was in real life. It will be out of place to dwell on the humour, satire, and realism of U Pon Nya in his non-dramatic works, but as they are echoed in his plays, perhaps it is essential to give some idea of what he is like in his other works: he is there comparable to Chaucer of the *Canterbury Tales* and the goatherd is but an example of his many creations who are akin to the miller and his quarrelsome companions. The humour of U Pon Nya is said to detract from the artistic unity of his plays. Doubtless, humour is dangerous in Burmese drama, in view of the actor's and the audience's love of laughter, often uncontrolled. U Kyin U did not indulge in humorous scenes or characters, though the interlude had been given to broad humour, perhaps because he thought that the artistry and seriousness of the drama were in danger of being lost in cheap farce. And in the decadent period the uncontrolled use of humour does destroy the artistry of the plays. But U Pon Nya keeps his humour under control, and often through it he increases the artistry of his plays. *Kawothala* has no unity, but the fault is not with the goatherd; in fact, one of the chief reasons why that play is at all interesting, is the existence of that character. In *Waythandaya* the humorous first scene has no direct connexion with the main action, but it stands as a contrast to the second scene, where pathos is the chief note. Again in the third scene U Pon Nya uses humour, but he keeps it under control so as to prevent it from interfering with the events connected with the main action. The failure by the decadent dramatists, who imitate his humorous scenes, encouraged to do so by their great popularity with the audience, to equal or even approach anywhere near U Pon Nya, emphasizes his greatness as a humorist. His humour is



comedy, not farce, and it appeals to the intellect, often helping to portray character, or to satirize the fads and fashions of the time.

With all his romantic tendencies, U Kyin U was a striver after perfection of form in his plays, and U Pon Nya follows him in that respect. U Kyin U aimed at a logical and clear unfolding of the plot. In the section dealing with *The Water-seller* I have shown how U Pon Nya, in striving to conform with this doctrine of U Kyin U was led on to something approximating to the observance of the three 'unities'. Of course, U Kyin U also did not know anything of western drama, but perhaps it will be interesting to consider how far his plays fitted in with the western theory of 'unities'. The unity of action would seem to be the main aim in U Kyin U's plays, for without it the logical unfolding of the plot was not possible. With regard to the unity of place, he did not limit his play to one, but he kept the places of action as few as possible. The forest and the palace were the places of action in *Daywagonban* and *Parpahein*; the action moved from one part of the forest to another, or from one part of the palace to another, but it never left the forest and the palace. In *Mahaw*, the places of action were the two cities. With regard to the unity of time, he did not limit himself to any fixed time, but as the clear unfolding of the plot made it necessary that there should be no gaps of time between the scenes, and very little should happen off-stage, the time of the plays limited itself to a few days. In *Daywagonban*, he had some difficulty as to the time. Sixteen years elapsed between the first scene where the young prince was stolen, and the second scene where he was shown as the adopted son of the ogress. And between that scene and the next, there was an interval of a few months, in which Daywagonban had to be educated by the hermit. After that, the action moved on rapidly and without a gap, except where the princess was put into the dungeon for seven days, but that gap was slightly bridged by the fight between the *naga* and the *galôn*, and the meeting of the hermit and his betrothed, which events happened while the princess was being imprisoned by Daywagonban. In *Parpahein*, the most mature and artistic of his plays, the unity of time was much better achieved. The action lasted from the morning of one day, through the next, until the dawning of the third day, and there were no gaps, most of the time being accounted for before the eyes of the audience. In *Mahaw*, though the actual time was not ascertainable, U Kyin U succeeded in producing the illusion of an action lasting for a few

hours, or at the most a day or two, in spite of the fact that the time taken by the action in the relevant portion of the *Jataka* was some months. U Pon Nya follows U Kyin U's aim in *Paduma* without any innovations, and without any startling success. In *The Water-seller* he fully achieves what the other had aimed at, and as we have seen, the play has an effect of completeness and flawless artistry. However, in *Wizaya* we find that he no longer conforms to the unities of time and place, and that he modifies U Kyin U's conception of the smooth movement of the action, though he still aims at the logical unfolding of the plot. The time of the action is many years, and between the scene where the embassy is sent in search of an ally for Ceylon and the next where the embassy returns with a princess, there is an interval long enough for the ogre-princess to give birth to a son and daughter, and there is another interval, this time of many years, between the marriage of *Wizaya* to his queen and the demand of the people that an heir must be found for the kingdom. The play has for its scenes the forest of Ceylon, the palace of the ogre-king, the capitals of three kingdoms, the palace of *Wizaya*, and an island near Ceylon. With regard to the unity of action, U Kyin U's conception of the smooth and logical movement of action, as seen through his practice, was that all should be related to the adventures of a hero, or a group of heroes. In *Wizaya* there are two different sets of heroes, *Wizaya* and his contemporaries, and the group headed by the nephew. However, U Pon Nya does not really break away from U Kyin U, because the true action and the true hero of the play is destiny, the other characters being mere servants of it. The modification then is that U Pon Nya takes an abstract notion as his hero. This point is missed by the later dramatists, who follow U Pon Nya, and in their plays they give different adventures of separate heroes, whose connexion with one another is some blood relationship, without the essential action that binds *Wizaya* to his nephew. *Kawthala* needs no comment as to its importance in U Pon Nya's dramatic practice, except that the use of the magic pond is to get out of the difficulty of the gap of sixteen years, which would otherwise divide the scenes. This device of the magic pond later becomes common practice in the hands of the decadent dramatists. In *Waythandaya* he again conforms in some respects with our theory of the 'unities'. Even the palace is not used, and the entire action takes place in the forest. The time of the action is not even one day, but only a few hours. However, he again changes his treatment of the

action. The main action is the grief and suffering of Ma-di, and that is shown only in the second scene, the other two scenes being used as a foil to the central scene. U Pon Nya seems to think that, though the first scene is not directly connected with the story, and though the third scene has little to do with the portrayal of Ma-di's character, they contribute to the main action in that they stand in contrast to it, and therefore help to heighten its effect. However, the result is not so artistic, and the play, in spite of its two 'unities', does not equal *The Water-seller* as a work of art. It has none the less some effect of completeness and artistry. U Pon Nya's love of, and mastery in, building up his play into a well-balanced structure of three parts, a central part with two wings, help to heighten the artistic effect. In *The Water-seller*, as has been already pointed out, the man is the central part with the king and the woman water-seller as wings, and in the final scene, at first, the king and the prince stand as the central structure, while on one side are male courtiers and on the other the princess and her ladies, and later, the empty middle-stage is the centre, with the king and courtiers on one side, and the water-sellers on the other. In *Waythandaya* the first scene and the last, both humorous, stand as wings to the second central scene of pathos. Again, the later dramatists fail to understand the essential qualities of *Waythandaya*, and they take it to mean that U Pon Nya's conception of the technique of a play is that humorous scenes and scenes of pathos should follow each other in turn, with the result that most decadent plays are mere collections of pathetic and humorous scenes, without any real connexion between them. It is ironical that imitation of U Pon Nya, who fully achieves U Kyin U's ideal of plot construction and perfection of form in *The Water-seller* and who nearly repeats the success in *Waythandaya*, should result in the decadent period of the drama.

U Pon Nya's plays belonged to an epoch lasting for about twenty years in Burmese history, when the kingdom gave a final flicker before permanent extinction. The years that followed U Kyin U were of gloom. The hopes of winning back the provinces lost to the British in 1824 were destroyed by the realization of the might of Britain, by the madness of the able king, Tharrawaddy (1837-47), and by the incompetence of his successor, Pagan (1847-53). The country suffered another disaster in 1852 when, through the king's fault, more provinces fell into British hands. During that period the drama was greatly neglected. In 1853 Mindon, who later

became the patron of U Pon Nya, rebelled successfully against his brother Pagan, and there came into being a promise of better times. He built a new capital, Mandalay, with wide streets and pleasant squares, and his wisdom and statesmanship won him the love of his people and the respect of the British. There was again an understanding between the court and the people, and the court became once more the centre of learning, after the lapse of some fifty years. Treaties of friendship between Burma and Britain and the personal affection the king had for Queen Victoria seemed to assure lasting peace to the country.<sup>1</sup> Dreams of a mighty empire, reflected in the heroic interludes, and to some extent in U Kyin U, were abandoned for ever. Peace and contentment were the keynote of the period, and there entered the drama, restored to the forefront by U Pon Nya, an atmosphere of calm, as opposed to that of strife in U Kyin U. Even in *Wisaya* that calmness prevailed. The epoch ended with the execution of U Pon Nya and the rebellion of Myingun, which caused the death of the heir to the throne, the ablest soldiers, the wisest statesmen, and the most learned scholars of the day, leaving the king alone to rule a country wrapped in gloom and a people torn into different factions over the pressing and difficult problem of succession.

U Pon Nya followed U Kyin U in expressing political opinions in his plays, but he went further and used the drama as a political weapon. In *Paduma* he attacked those ladies of the court who had not shown enough respect or patronage to him, and he was so successful that he became a power in the land. The king, the crown prince, and the chief queen realized this, and they used *The Water-seller* to announce to the people, who were secretly getting ready for a civil war, that the threatened rupture between the brothers, king and prince, happily, would not materialize. Even after its author's death, the play was once specially performed at court, to test opinion with regard to the king's plan to appoint an able prince, who was far removed from the line of succession, as heir to the throne. In the middle of the performance, a senior prince said: 'If father wants to

<sup>1</sup> One of the most prized possessions of King Mindon was a gold watch which Queen Victoria had presented him, and which he always wore. During the Indian Mutiny, in spite of temptation, he remained friendly and even sent help to the British, saying that he would never 'strike a friend in trouble'. Cf. G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma*, school edition: the ordinary edition gives the history up to 1824 only.

appoint a lowly prince as crown prince, there will be no objection on our part. But it does not mean that he will become king for, look at *The Water-seller*.' The project was consequently abandoned. This incident illustrates the power of the drama in the politics of the time. *Kazthala* was probably meant to convey to a small section of the people who were against treating with the British and wanting revenge the doctrine that destiny, a worthy foe, and the interests of a country would act against any personal motive of revenge. *Wisaya* was written to win over supporters for Prince Myingun. He had been wild and troublesome as the youthful *Wisaya*, and the suggestion was that Myingun would bring greatness to Burma if he were but entrusted with the throne. Also, as Myingun had the project of killing both his father and father-in-law, the crown prince, the play was probably meant to spread the doctrine that the destined greatness of a country called for, and justified, sacrifices. The play was so popular that probably Myingun thought wrongly that public opinion had been moulded to give him support when he rebelled. The rebellion failed, and U Pon Nya lost his life, chiefly through the very play which most Burmese critics acclaim as his masterpiece.

## CHAPTER V

### THE DECADENT PERIOD

#### 1. THE DRAMA FROM 1866 TO 1877

THE years that followed the Myingun rebellion and the execution of U Pon Nya were years of distress and discontent. The rebellion had taken its toll of able men, and the king was left alone to rule a country, discontented especially for economic reasons. Lower Burma was being developed by the British, and the resulting increase in commerce with the west was changing the existing economic conditions in both Lower and Upper Burma. Naturally, the period of transition was one of distress and discontent. The English and French were rivals in their desire to gain control of Burmese trade relations, and the Burmese played on the rivalry by bargaining, making secret treaties, and asking exorbitant prices for favours granted, thereby denying economic stability to the country. The king was without advisers and a dying man, and as the eternal question of succession—the bane of Burmese politics—was improbable of solution, the English and French struggled for influence, and consequently, the palace was one mass of intrigue. Corruption was rife in the kingdom, administration was neglected, the judges took bribes, and robbers roamed the country at will. Amidst such adverse conditions, the drama could not flourish, and though the plays of U Pon Nya were still acted, studied and imitated, no dramatist of even moderate ability appeared.

We have seen that from the beginning, song and dance were the main items of entertainment on the stage. Even when the Siamese plays were being presented at court and influencing the drama all over the country, the song and dance were still important, first, because of the earlier tradition, second, because the professional actors were in reality singers and dancers, and third, because the song was of great importance in the *Rama* play. However, with the coming of developed plays, the dance was eliminated, although the song occasionally remained. In U Kyin U's plays the dance did not

appear at all, and the song had lost its importance to such an extent that only one scene in all his plays had songs, which was in *Daywaggonban*, where the hermit and the two princesses spoke to each other in songs. Though U Pon Nya was a great writer of songs, not one appeared in his plays. These great dramatists, through their brilliance, made the audience interested in the play alone, and the professional actors had no choice but to follow the dictates of the famous playwrights. After U Pon Nya, through lack of interest in true drama and because there were no able dramatists, the drama fell again into the hands of the professional actors, who had always considered themselves dancers and singers. They continued to present the great plays and their imitations, but only as frameworks for their songs and dances. We shall see later that after the final flicker of the drama during the years 1877-86 it perished in the hands of the actors with their interest in song and dance.

The people themselves wanted song and dance. They wanted an entertainment pleasing to the eye and the ear, without taxing the brain. They wanted an escape from the realities of life, because they were weary of the present and anxious for the future, as they knew not what dreadful events the next few months would bring. They wanted new dances and new tunes, and they applauded elaborate dresses and brilliantly staged scenes; and the actors could give them what they wanted as, through the influence of English and French touring companies, the stage scenery and devices had developed by leaps and bounds.<sup>1</sup> They demanded both laughter and tears, but as they desired the drama to appeal only to their senses and not to the intellect, what they really wished for and received were farce and sentimental pathos. The spirit of the audience had changed since the days of the great dramatists. The drama came into being in the age of triumph, when the attitude of the audience towards life was one of serenity and optimism. During U Kyin U's time, disaster, in the shape of the loss of provinces to the British, had overtaken the country, but there seemed to be a promise of better times, and therefore the spirit of the nation was still serene. When U Pon Nya wrote his plays, more provinces had been lost to the British, but again there was a promise of better times, and the spirit of the audience remained calm and serene. But after U Pon Nya, the spirit was one of despair and anxiety.

<sup>1</sup> The development of the stage is considered in detail in chap. vii.

So for about a decade after the death of U Pon Nya, the drama decayed and was left entirely in the hands of actors. And in Upper Burma, the real home of the drama, it never recovered from their influence. True, some scholars in the quiet of a monastery wrote many a play, retelling a religious story, but their plays were never meant to be presented on the stage, nor did they follow the established dramatic traditions. They were merely scholarly exercises, and though many contained masterly prose and poetry, they did not really belong to the true drama, for they were plays only in name.<sup>1</sup> In Lower Burma, however, scholars again assumed control of the drama, though they had to comply with the desires of the actors in many matters. The change in the venue of Burmese drama is significant. Rangoon, the capital of British Burma, and not Mandalay, the national capital, was now the centre of dramatic development. The reasons for the change were many. The court was the centre of political intrigues and the drama could no longer look to it for development. Upper Burma was in a hopeless condition, and it never recovered until some years after the completion of the British conquest in 1886. In Lower Burma, on the other hand, by about 1875, the benefits of a developed commerce were seen, and after a few years of transition, prosperity was returning. There was peace and stability of government. The spirit of the people in Lower Burma was no longer of anxiety and despair. But it was not one of great serenity, for they realized that Upper Burma would soon fall into British hands, and the Burmese would never again have a kingdom of their own. There was intense regret, and the Burmese Crown, from which the past greatness of the nation had flowed, came to be looked upon with great sentimentality. True, the court in Upper Burma was in a disgraceful condition, especially since the death of Mindon and the accession of his son, Theebaw (1875-86), but that very deterioration, by contrast, enhanced the sentimental respect for the past glories of the throne. The drama therefore was used to present scenes of great splendour, in which court manners and customs were shown to an audience who, having come under an alien rule since 1824, knew their national court only from hearsay. That was why sentimentality and spectacle continued to dominate the drama, even though conditions had improved enough

<sup>1</sup> Some plays of this type, printed in Lower Burma, are preserved in the British Museum, e.g. *Thurwana-thama* and *Maha Zanaka*, both by monks and founded on U Awbatha's *Jatakas* of the same names. Many of these plays are still obtainable in Burma.



for scholars to rehandle it. The introduction of cheap printing in Lower Burma was of the utmost importance to the drama. Printing had been known to the Burmese long before the British administered Lower Burma, but it was an expensive and laborious affair. The British introduced cheap and efficient printing presses, worked by cheap but skilled Indian labour. Once the stage of transition had been completed and economic prosperity had returned, printing spread all over Lower Burma and widened the circle of admirers of the drama, encouraged the study of the great plays in their original form as distinct from the modified versions of the professional actors, and created a public eager not only to see but also to read plays. As a result of these various causes scholars began writing plays again after 1875, but their efforts were not very successful until Saya Yaw in 1877 wrote and produced his *History of Thaton*.

## 2. THE HISTORY OF THATON

Saya Yaw's story is remarkably original. In order that the question of succession should be settled beforehand, the young king of Thaton is advised by his ministers to take a consort without delay, and he promises to consider the matter. In the next scene, a brother and sister, belonging to a semi-civilized tribe on a neighbouring mountain, are entering the city to seek employment, for they have been starving since the death of their parents. The scene shifts to the centre of the city, where a rich nobleman and his wife are quarrelling and blaming each other, because they have no children to inherit their wealth. The characters are comic, and the scene is humorous. As they stand shouting at each other, the brother and sister pass by, and they are struck by the girl's beauty and the young man's nobility of bearing. When they discover that the strangers are without parents and are looking for employment, they, in great joy, adopt them as son and daughter. In the next scene, merchants from the Shan hills arrive at the city, singing and dancing their own songs and dances. They soon dispose of their wares, and they are making preparations to leave when the brother arrives. He becomes friendly with the merchants, and after listening to their tales of romance and adventure in their hills, he decides to accompany them to their home. He asks permission to go from his foster-parents and his sister, who reluctantly let him go. The foster-parents cry, and the brother and sister bid farewell to each other in songs of great tenderness. In the next scene, the chieftain of a Shan state is sorely

troubled in mind, because he has only a daughter to succeed him. While his daughter, the Shan princess, plays and sings and dances in her garden, the merchants with the brother pass by. The brother and the princess fall in love with each other and plight their troth in song and dance. The chieftain arrives on the scene, but fortunately for all concerned, he approves of the young man and proclaims him heir.

Meanwhile the sister in Thaton is having her adventures. A god, who had been brother to her in a previous existence, gives her an ear-ring as a token of affection. She puts it away for wearing on special occasions. The king passes by her window, falls in love, and makes her queen. That night, as the new queen awaits her husband, she sings happy songs to herself, then puts on the ear-ring, and falls asleep. She now looks like an ogress for, unknown to the well-meaning god, the ear-ring causes its wearer to have the appearance of an ogress. The king, on entering, thinks her to be an ogress who has assumed human form to bring disaster to his kingdom. So he orders her execution and commands that her foster-father himself must execute her, as he suspects the nobleman of having known all the time that his adopted daughter is an evil being. So at dawn, the girl is put into a velvet bag,<sup>1</sup> and the doting father is ordered by soldiers to beat her to death. He refuses, in spite of tortures, until the girl begs him to dispatch her quickly and end her agony. She dies, singing pathetic songs, while the father and even the soldiers cry. In compliance with her request before her death, the dead body is sent floating down the river on a raft. The father then engages a bricklayer to build a pagoda on the spot where she was executed. The bricklayer is a cynical old fellow, who thinks some unnecessary fuss is being made of a dead girl. He is a comic character.

The god of the forest stops the raft and lays the dead queen on the river bank. Her ghost appears before the brother, now chief of the Shan state in succession to his father-in-law. He at once leaves for Thaton attended by a minister. The god of the forest, unknown to the brother, causes him to find the body of his sister. He is grief-stricken, and guessing from the velvet bag what had happened, swears revenge on the king of Thaton. He

<sup>1</sup> According to established custom, Burmese royalty were put into velvet bags before execution. Also, as no blood of royal persons should be shed on the scaffold, the usual method of their execution was by drowning, burning or beating.

sends his minister back to fetch his Shan army. He cries over the body of his sister, singing funeral songs. An ogress appears and promises to bring the sister back to life, if the brother will agree to take her (the ogress) as consort during his stay in the forest. On his acceptance of the proposal, she restores the sister to life. Soon the ogress gives birth to a son, who at once attains manhood through his mother's supernatural powers. The young man is seized with a desire to travel and obtain homage from human kings, and he leaves, taking with him a magic sword. He returns after some time and relates his adventures: he has received homage from all except one king; him, the young man tried to kill but the magic sword refused to come out of its sheath; awed by the incident, he secretly visited the king's bed-chamber at night and drew a portrait of him. Now the young man shows the portrait to his ogress-mother, his father, and to his aunt, who recognizes it to be that of her husband, the king of Thaton. She cries and sings as old memories are revived, and soon dies of a broken heart.

The minister arrives with the Shan army, and the brother leads his men to the gates of Thaton. The king brings out his forces, but as the two armies face each other for battle, the sister, now a *nat*-spirit, appears on the scene and makes peace between her husband and her brother. After extracting an oath from both that the peace will not be broken, she leaves, dancing a spirit dance and singing a song, in which she tells of the various misfortunes that befell her in life and blames fate for her tragedy.

The very title of the play illustrates the sentimental and romantic attitude of the period towards history. Saya Yaw calls his play *The History of Thaton*, but it has nothing to do with the history of the real kingdom of Thaton which flourished before the eleventh century A.D. No dramatist of the Age of Learning which introduced the Siamese *Rama* or of U Pon Nya's time would have dared to call it a 'History'.

The plot is formless, and it moves on without logic or unity. Many of the incidents are unnecessary to the story, and some are unexplained. The god who gives the ear-ring to the sister, never appears again to save her whom he professes to love so well. The ogress who brings the sister back to life makes no attempt to repeat her performance when the girl dies of a broken heart. The story is disjointed as it is merely a framework for incidents which make the audience laugh or weep or gaze in awe.

With all its faults, the play achieves what it sets out to do. It tries to compromise between the tradition of dramatic scholarship on the one hand, and the demands of the audience and the desires of the acting profession on the other. To make the compromise possible, Saya Yaw has to evolve a new interpretation of the old doctrine that the essence of dramatic technique was the logical and clear unfolding of the plot.<sup>1</sup> The great achievement of this play is in the way the songs and dances are knit into it. The characters sing only when they are very happy or sad, and special dances are brought into the play in a masterly way; the Shan dance is introduced through the incidents connected with the Shan merchants, and a *nat*-spirit dance through the device of making the sister such a spirit after death. The ending of the play must have satisfied both the audience and the actors. It was sentimental, pathetic, and strange enough for the decadent audience, and it afforded an opportunity for the actors to show some spirit-dancing—the basis of their profession. The lyrics and the poetical language of the play satisfied the scholar-dramatists and brought back the drama definitely to the old tradition.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. *THE BABOON BROTHER AND SISTER*

*The History of Thaton* was immensely popular, and it was produced repeatedly all over Lower Burma, and even troubled Upper Burma saw it performed sometimes. Within a few weeks of publication, 15,000 copies of the play in book form were sold. The figure was gigantic for those days, and the people were astounded. In spite of the fact that he was now looked upon as the greatest among contemporary dramatists, Saya Yaw wrote no other play. In fact, although there is ample evidence in the play that he was intimately connected with the drama and the acting profession, the *History* is the only dramatic work he ever composed. Many imitations of the successful play were put on the stage and published, but they were unworthy of their model, and the appetite of the public for the drama remained unsatisfied until U Ku composed *The Baboon Brother and Sister*.

U Ku was an able musician and song-writer. He had been connected with the drama long before *The Baboon Brother and Sister* (his first play), for he had been adviser to many acting troupes as he was a noted student of dramatic theory and practice. He wrote and

<sup>1</sup> This new conception of dramatic technique is considered in detail in s. 5.

<sup>2</sup> An extract from this play is given in appendix x.

produced his ' Baboon Play ' (as it was commonly called) in 1877, a few months after *The History of Thaton*. It was an immediate success on the stage, and 20,000 copies of the play were sold in a short time.

The story, which is an original one, is as follows. The king awaits the return of his son and heir who is away at a university in India. In a soliloquy, we learn that he has two other children, unknown to the people. He was out one day on a hunt in the forest when he became separated from his followers. When darkness came, he climbed a tree for shelter, and found himself in the nest of a baboon, who gave him fruit to eat but forced him to mate with her. He was kept a prisoner for a year, during which time a son and daughter were born to the baboon. Both children had the appearance of human beings. Some time later, he escaped and returned to the capital, where he told his story in all particulars except that two children were born to the baboon. As the prince in India is the child of his queen whom he married only after his misadventure with the baboon, the king thinks that the baboon children, if still alive, are the real heirs. In the next scene, we find the prince returning from India with an attendant. They sing and dance and make humorous speeches. On arrival at the palace, he is at once crowned king, as his father wishes to retire to the monastery as soon as possible.

A hunter and his wife are quarrelling, because the husband always talks and behaves as if he were a nobleman, and because the wife is a shrew. They are comic characters. To escape from the nagging wife, he goes into the forest in search of game. A brother and sister are in the forest. The girl has attained the age of sixteen years, and begs the brother to tell the story of their birth, as she is now old enough to know. He tells that their mother was a baboon and that they are the children of her union with the king of the neighbouring city. The mother had told him the facts as she lay dying. They go to the grave of their mother and pray, cry, and sing pathetic songs. The hunter enters, and in a soliloquy he considers whether the account of the brother to which he has been listening unseen is true. He has heard of the king's captivity in the hands of a baboon and therefore concludes the account to be true. He tells the brother and sister that he has been sent by the new king to bring them to the city, as they are his own brother and sister. The two are afraid, and they bewail their fate in songs, but in the end they decide that they are human and must go and live among men.

When the hunter and his companions arrive at his hut, the wife jumps to the conclusion that the girl is the hunter's mistress, and beats her. She cries, and her brother cries and begs for mercy in songs. At last the hunter succeeds in making his wife believe his account regarding the new-comers. She is willing to adopt them as son and daughter, but considers his plan of taking them to the king would be highly dangerous.

The next scene is between a landlord and his son in Upper Burma. They are comic characters. As there is a shortage of labour and they badly need a ploughman, they decide to visit their great friend, the hunter, in Lower Burma, and ask his help. They arrive at the hunter's hut, and when they tell him and his wife the reason of the visit, she suggests that her adopted son should become their ploughman. The hunter is against the proposal, but he is scolded into silence by the wife. The young man and his sister refuse to part, but when they are beaten by the wife, he has no choice but to go. They bid each other farewell in tender songs.

The wife ill-treats the girl so much that the hunter, who dearly loves the maiden as a daughter, decides on taking her to the king. He tells his wife that if he were to offer the girl to the king without mentioning her real origin, she would be made queen as she is exceedingly beautiful, and they would be amply rewarded. The wife points out that if the king should ever find out the truth, all of them would be executed. He discusses the matter with the girl herself, and both come to the conclusion that any risk is worth taking to get away from the cruel woman. So he takes the maiden to the king, telling him that she is a gift from the fairies in the forest. The king makes her queen, and him a nobleman. The scene closes with the hunter bragging to his wife.

The king wanders about the city at night, listening to the gossip of his subjects. He hears a couple quarrelling. The husband accuses the wife of copying the rude manners of the ex-hunter's wife. The quarrel leads to a discussion of the rumour that the queen is in reality a baboon. They sleep and the king passes along the darkened stage. Then, the ex-hunter and his wife are heard talking in bed. The wife is frightened, and as her fear makes her more human, she is no longer a nagging woman. She is anxious lest the king should hear the rumour about his queen. The hunter consoles her, saying that no one would dare to speak about the rumour to the king, as a bringer of bad news usually gets identified with the bad news itself and is punished.

'The king will never know. Let us sleep,' the hunter says, and the wife echoes: 'Yes, he will never know. Aye, let us sleep,' as the king silently leaves the scene.

The next scene is the bedchamber of the queen, who is in travail. In a soliloquy the king decides to wait until the heir is born. The queen cries as she has had a bad dream. A son is born, and the queen is overjoyed. The next moment an executioner arrives to take her away. She is beaten to death.

As the ploughing is done, the brother joyously returns to the hunter's hut, and is puzzled as it is empty. A passer-by informs him of the misfortune that has come to his household. He sings sad songs. That night, he enters the palace and runs away with his nephew into the forest, where a god makes the child grow up at once into a youth of eighteen years. The uncle and nephew wander about the forest in search of food. The youth finds himself in a strange city which adjoins the forest, and entering a pleasant garden, he falls asleep on a bed of flowers. Now the city has no king but only a queen, and soothsayers have foretold that a man, destined to be a great king, will be found one day sleeping on the bed of flowers. Some courtiers find the prince asleep, awaken him, and hastily fetch the queen. The prince and the queen fall in love, and plight their troth in song and dance. They go to the palace where the young prince is crowned king. His uncle meanwhile is in great anxiety for his nephew, and following footmarks, he arrives at the palace, where he loudly demands the restoration of his nephew to him. He is taken to the king, whom he tries to embrace, recognizing him to be his lost nephew. But the king is ashamed of his lowly uncle, denies all knowledge, and orders that he be trampled to death by elephants.

The scene is now the place of execution. The uncle sings doleful songs. The elephants, though prodded on by their drivers, refuse to trample on him. This is taken to be a sign of his innocence by those present, and an appeal for pardon is made to the king, who arrives on the scene, but he is reluctant to stop the execution. A goddess appears, and the uncle recognizes her to be his sister. She tells the king that she was his mother, and makes him repent and ask for forgiveness from the uncle. She then leaves, dancing a spirit dance and singing a sorrowful song in which she relates her tragic story.

The similarities between this play and *The History of Thaton* are many and obvious. The idea of a brother and sister being parted,

and the ending are direct borrowings from the earlier play. In some ways it is more 'decadent' than the other. The hankering after sensational effect is seen in the author's making the hero and heroine children of a baboon, in the scene where the queen is shown to be in travail, and in the final scene where elephants are used, to make it more elaborate. But, in other ways this play is more artistic, for it has some effect of unity. In the *History*, the misfortune that befell the sister was unexplained and came without warning, but in this play, there is an atmosphere of impending tragedy. From the beginning, the audience is made to feel that in all probability, some disaster will befall the brother and sister, as they are children of an unnatural union. Whereas in the *History* the sister suffered through no fault of her own, our heroine here agrees to deceive the king, taking the risk of execution with open eyes, and commits the sin of incest.<sup>1</sup> Retribution is apparent, and this atmosphere of impending punishment makes the play quite artistic up to the point where the heroine is executed, notwithstanding the disjointed nature of the story taken as a whole. And there are scenes where dramatic irony is used with artistic effect. In one scene, the queen awakes after a bad dream and the king pretends to be still greatly in love with her, while the audience knows from his previous soliloquy that she is to be executed as soon as the child is born. In another, the brother approaches the hut singing and dancing in joy, little guessing that his sister has been executed. The scene where the king listens to the gossip of his subjects, is the most dramatic in the play. The stage is in darkness, the king moves and listens stealthily, and the atmosphere is tense and full of suspense. Then voices of the quarrelling couple are heard off-stage. They are envying the sudden good fortune of the hunter and his wife, little realizing that the objects of their envy

<sup>1</sup> To keep the blood as pure as possible, Burmese kings often married their half-sisters. This royal practice was not confined to Burma, but is also known in Siam, the East Indies, Peru when under the Incas, and Egypt under the Pharaohs (G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma*, p. 324). But among the people, it has always been considered a sin and a crime to marry one's half-brother or sister. In this play, although the sister is a king's daughter and her husband is king, there is no doubt that the marriage between them is suggested to be incestuous.

To the end, the sister is in love with her half-brother husband. The Burmese decadent dramatists often take incestuous love between brother and sister for their themes, like the Elizabethan decadent playwrights. Cf. Ford, *'Tis Pity She's a Whore*.



would soon be put to death. Then, we hear the voices of the hunter and his wife. At the end of their discussion, they say to each other: 'The king will never know. Let us sleep,' not knowing that they have just sealed their own fate.

In spite of the great success of this play, U Ku did not write another in the real decadent manner until 1881. Perhaps, being a student of the well-constructed plays of U Kyin U and U Pon Nya, he was dissatisfied with his 'Baboon Play', for he based his *Way-thandaya* (1878), *Buyidat* (1880), and *Karka-wunnaya* (1881) on *Jataka* stories. He also produced *The Water-seller* with his own additions. Though all these plays lie outside the real decadent drama, they are worthy of consideration, because of their tolerable success and because of his immense reputation with his contemporaries.

He seems to have realized that the drama was decaying. His return to the *Jatakas* for stories for his plays is probably an indication that he is against the lack of serious purpose and some interpretation of life in contemporary drama, and against the loosely-knit story, where the main action is obliterated by inclusion of unnecessary incidents for sensational effect. In his three *Jataka* plays, he tries to include both the realistic atmosphere of the *Jataka* plays of U Pon Nya and the romantic atmosphere of the decadent drama with its song and dance. The result is not artistic. The characters who have been speaking in the realistic style of U Pon Nya appear ridiculous when they start to sing and dance in the best decadent manner. Probably, when produced on the stage, the effect was worse as the professional actors must have made the plays more in their own style than the author had intended. In 1880, when the boys of the Government High School at Rangoon went to U Ku for help in their terminal entertainment, he suggested the production of *The Water-seller* with songs added to it. It was a great opportunity for experiment, as the actors would be amateurs and totally under his direction. But this adapted *Water-seller* is a failure, and shows clearly how difficult it is for the two types of the drama to be joined into a harmonious play. The water-sellers and the king sing songs composed by U Ku at the end of their speeches written by U Pon Nya. The artistic unity of the great play is destroyed, in spite of the lyrical beauty of the songs.<sup>1</sup> The great success of another writer's

<sup>1</sup> U Po Kya's edition of *The Water-seller* (a 'textbook' of the Council of National Education) gives U Ku's songs in footnotes.

*Saw-phay* and *Saw-may* (which is considered in the next section) in 1880, tempted U Ku to abandon his experiments in the drama, and he produced *The History of Okkalapa* in 1881 and *Minnandar* in 1883, both written in the decadent manner.

The great contribution of this dramatist to the study of Burmese drama is his annotated edition of the *Rama* play, published in 1880.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4. SAW-PHAY AND SAW-MAY

The story of this play is as follows. As the king is unmarried, he is advised by his ministers to take as consort Saw-may, daughter of a rich nobleman, famed for her beauty, and he agrees. In the next scene, on receiving a message from the king, the nobleman tries to persuade Saw-may to accept the royal offer of marriage, but she is in love with Saw-phay, a charming young man, but without any position or wealth. Hopeful, who is present, takes the side of the daughter, saying that she is too young to be queen. This Hopeful is a stupid, comical fellow, who secretly hopes that the girl will ultimately fall in love with him. The old nobleman, now very angry, swears that he will force her to marry the king in a few days. The girl has made an appointment to meet her lover that night, and now she decides to run away. As she is anxious lest Hopeful should guess her intention, she misleads him by saying that as she has always been in love with him, she will elope with him that night. At the appointed time, Saw-phay enters the girl's garden, and signals to her by imitating the call of a cuckoo, as prearranged. She enters, but as Hopeful follows her, the young man hides behind a bush. Hopeful tells the girl that her father is soon coming to look round the garden, as he is suspicious about a cuckoo cry at the dead of night. She hides herself behind a bush, and begs Hopeful to prevent the old man from looking round. The father enters, and to him Hopeful tells of the adventures he has had at nights listening to the sweet call of a cuckoo. At last, his suspicions allayed, the old man leaves the garden. Coming out of their hiding places, the lovers embrace each other, to the great annoyance of Hopeful, who now challenges Saw-phay to a fight; but the girl intervenes and tells Hopeful, that although she has always been in love with Saw-phay, she has also always loved Hopeful as a big brother. At this he is appeased, and promises to follow them in their flight

<sup>1</sup> An extract from this play is given in appendix xi.

to the forest, as companion. The lovers are elated, and they leave the scene with Hopeful, all dancing and singing. In the next scene, they are in the forest. Leaving Saw-may at a sheltered place, the two men go in search of fruit. They dance and sing and laugh as they go along, until they realize that they have lost the way and do not know how to get back to the girl. Saw-phay is sad, but Hopeful tries his best to cheer him up. The two wander on, until the god of the forest appears, and tells them that they are now far away from where the maiden is, but no harm will befall her as he will go there at once and protect her. He also shows them the way they must follow to get back to her.

The king, in pursuit of his betrothed and her lover, is now in the forest with his army. On finding the girl, he mocks her, insults her, and then orders her execution. The god now arrives on the scene, and enters into an argument with the king, telling him not to behave like a little child or an angry fool, and pointing out that there is no good in killing the girl, for that will not win him her love. The king, admitting his folly, goes back to his city, leaving the girl with the god as a friendly gift.

Meanwhile Saw-phay and Hopeful have lost their way again, and find themselves in a city ruled by a beautiful queen, who, on being pressed by ministers to take a consort, has announced that she will marry the man who can open her magic box. Her people are in despair as they think that no one will ever be able to open the box, for it has a hundred locks on it. But Saw-phay wanders into the palace and touches the box, and through sheer luck, it flies open. He marries the queen and becomes king himself, the happy occasion being celebrated by songs and dances by the king and queen. The god, through his supernatural vision, sees the marriage celebrations, and informs Saw-may, who weeps and sings doleful songs. She begs leave to go to her lover, but the god is anxious for her safety as he cannot accompany her, because being guardian of the forest, he cannot leave it for long. In the end, however, he has to agree as the girl persists in going, but he first changes her into a beggar with a pock-marked face. He warns her that she cannot be transformed back into a princess until three months have elapsed, and if she tells any one that she is in reality a beautiful maiden, she will at once become a statue made of pearl. He bids a tender farewell, and the girl leaves the forest. Arriving at her lover's city, she enters the palace and finds him. In her excitement, she tells Saw-phay who she

is, forgetting the god's warning, and as a result, she becomes a statue. The god, through his supernatural vision, again sees what is happening, and coming at once, he throws some water on the statue, and Saw-may comes to life again. She is made senior queen.

The last scene is the bedchamber of Saw-phay and Saw-may. They sing to each other and fall asleep. Then the girl wakes up and sings a sorrowful song to herself, bewailing that, although her lover is restored to her, she has to share him with another queen.

This play is undoubtedly the most artistic of all the decadent plays. It tells a coherent story, and there is no glaring attempt at sensationalism, nor are there scenes comparable to the execution scenes of *The History of Thaton* and of the 'Baboon Play'. It is free from blood and horror and too much pathos. And perhaps the story is more logical and more natural because it is the story of lovers and not of brother and sister.

*Saw-phay and Saw-may* has an effect of artistic completeness which no other play of the period possesses. The action moves logically and smoothly, unhampered by unnecessary scenes or unconnected incidents. The dramatist concentrates on creating an atmosphere of light romance and nothing else, and that atmosphere is sustained throughout the play, unbroken by scenes giving an impression of suspense and horror.

Two scenes need special mention. The scene where Hopeful discourses on the cuckoo is perhaps the best comic scene in Burmese drama. The humour is free from coarseness, a fault of which other dramatists including the great U Pon Nya are guilty. And it is something new in dramatic technique, for although irony has been used before for other purposes, this is the first occasion where it is used purely for comic effect. The audience, knowing that the cuckoo's cry is a signal, laughs with Hopeful, who, in spite of his serious tone and demeanour, is enjoying himself at the expense of the old man. But Hopeful himself is also the victim of the laughter, for he does not realize that the signal is not for the elopement of Saw-may and Hopeful, but of Saw-may and Saw-phay. The last scene of the play is the least artistic, for it savours of sentimentalism and striving after sensational effect. The logical ending of the play, because of its atmosphere of light romance, should be a happy one. When the heroine is brought back to life and made the senior queen, all seems well, for it would not be fair to the State or to the other queen, if the hero were to abdicate or divorce her so that the heroine should be his

only wife.<sup>1</sup> Yet Saw-may cries in the last scene, and closes the play on a note of pathos. The same scene appears also to be an attempt at sensational effect in showing the bedchamber of the two lovers on their nuptial night, but perhaps the fault is not more heinous and not less excusable than the bedroom and underclothes scenes of some modern plays and films in Europe and America. In spite of its faults, the scene must appeal to many because of the tender pathos and beautiful poetry it contains. In any case it delighted the audience of the day, and it seems even likely that the dramatist put in the scene against his own artistic sense to please the audience and the actors who admired so much the pathetic endings of *The History of Thaton* and the 'Baboon Play'.

The immense popularity of the play tempted the dramatist to write a second part to it.

As Saw-may is soon going to give birth to an heir, the rival queen in jealousy plots with the court astrologer to bring about her downfall. A son is soon born, and the astrologer, summoned by the king to foretell the destiny of the little prince, pronounces him to be a wizard and Saw-may a witch, although he realizes that the child is destined to be a great emperor. King Saw-phay, believing the astrologer, exiles both the mother and the son, and she leaves, singing sorrowful songs of farewell. Wandering into the forest, she meets her old friend the god, who sprinkles some water on the child, making him grow up at once into a youth of sixteen years. As he is a man born to be a great king, flames issue from his mouth and arms. He wants to know who his father is, but the mother and the god evade his question. He is seized by a desire to worship the banyan tree under which the Buddha attained Buddhahood, but as he cannot go to India, he prays that a replica of the tree should grow before him, and at once the desired replica appears. Overjoyed, the young prince again successfully prays for a wall of fire to appear round the replica, so that no one can go near it except himself. In the meantime the god has gone to the king and told him the truth regarding his son, scolding him for his cruel treatment of the senior queen. As the king doubts his words, the god asks him to go and see

<sup>1</sup> It is neither a crime nor a sin to marry two wives, but in the case of commoners, society frowns on it. Her husband's taking even a mistress is ground for divorce for a wife. But Burmese kings, mainly for state reasons, had more than one wife. This is the only Burmese play where the hero ends up by marrying two wives.

the miracle of the tree in the forest. The king arrives there and marvelling at the miracle, tries to get nearer, but at once he and his followers fall down unconscious, overcome by the wall of fire. The young prince, troubled in mind over his unknown parentage, enters, and caring nothing for the unconscious people at his feet, shouts out to the world his question: 'Who is my father?' The mother, arriving on the scene, is distracted, thinking the king to be dead. She tells her son that the king at his feet is his father, and mother and son cry. The god now enters, and the queen, in great grief, accuses him of being the cause of all the trouble. But he calms her down with soothing words and sprinkling the inevitable water on the unconscious persons, restores them to consciousness. The king and his queen are reconciled, but tired of the misery and disappointment of power, they become monk and nun. The young prince, who becomes king in his father's place, promptly orders the execution of the other queen and the astrologer.

The story, though quite coherent, is meant to be a framework for sensational episodes. Flames coming forth from the mouth of the young prince, the sudden appearance of the tree, the wall of fire, and the king and followers falling unconscious are obvious attempts at melodrama and sensation. Even religion is used to inspire an atmosphere of strangeness and awe, and as a result, the entry into monastic life of the hero and heroine lacks conviction and dramatic effect, unlike similar incidents in U Kyin U's *Parpahein* and U Pon Nya's *The Water-seller*. And the showing on the stage of the queen giving birth to a child is unforgivable in the dramatist of delightful romance who has written the first part. He copies this from the travail scene of the 'Baboon Play', but he has enough artistic sense left to refrain from showing the actual execution of the other queen and the astrologer. The play has a short comic scene in which Hopeful tries his best to stop the new-born child from crying. It is delightful.

The success of this play was even greater than that of the first, and the dramatist was again encouraged to write another, entitled *Tin-tin and Khin-khin*. It is in reality a recasting of the First Part of *Saw-phay and Saw-may* to suit and satisfy still more the tastes of the time. Tin-tin is the equivalent of Saw-phay, Khin-khin of Saw-may, Hopeful we find under another name, and in imitation of the cuckoo scene, we have a 'cat' scene where the lover signals by imitating the mewing of a cat and on the girl's father coming into the garden, Hopeful's equivalent discourses on the habits and customs of cats. In place

plays, the doctrine of logical and clear unfolding of plot perishes, for there is no plot to unfold.

The decadent dramatists try to appeal not to the mind but to the senses, and naturally we find in their plays glaring attempts at sentimentality and sensationalism. Tears occur often and in great abundance on the slightest excuse. Even in the quite artistic 'Baboon Play', sentimentality is the chief fault, and the hero appears weak and unattractive, for he does nothing but cry, trying to protect his sister not by manly action but by tears. One reason why *Saw-phay* and *Saw-may* appears so far above other plays of the period is in its freedom from sentimental pathos until the last scene. When the heroine and hero are parted, they cry, but they appear sincere in their sorrow, and the play ends quite happily. In most other plays of the period, the hero and heroine are made to undergo misfortune after misfortune, so as to give them ample opportunity to sing pathetic songs. The sentimentality is heightened by sensationalism, for the more unusual and terrible the suffering of hero or heroine the greater is the pathos. When a queen is executed, she has to be slowly beaten. When a hero is put to death, he has to be trodden on by elephants. When a princess is banished, the orders for her exile have to be announced when she is in travail. For, in the decadent drama, swift and sudden death or misfortune seems out of place, and the agony has to be long drawn out and unusual in order to increase the desired effect. Even in the 'Baboon Play', written by the most learned of the decadent dramatists, we find ample use of blood and horror. The First Part of *Saw-phay* and *Saw-may* is the one play of the period which is free from horror. In *Tin-tin* and *Khin-khin*, the last scene where the heroine dies dancing, ill and mad, is typically decadent. Madness, leprosy, incest, and a woman in travail are favourite subjects. Dead bodies are popular, and in one play, a scene occurs where the hero is shown roasting and eating his new-born heir.<sup>1</sup>

Comic scenes occur in the decadent plays, as dramatic relief from scenes of horror and pathos. The humour is good humour, and in many ways it is an advance even on U Pon Nya. Lewd references are very rare. There is some satire, but it is without bitterness. All the comic characters are lovable in their own way. The comedy is one of 'humours', and we have admirably drawn portraits of a nagging wife and a cynical bricklaying philosopher in *The History of*

<sup>1</sup> *When Father Eats His Son*, by an unknown author.

*Thaton*, and the bragging hunter in the 'Baboon Play'. Hopeful is an artistically drawn character, and the cuckoo scene is delightful. Other decadent dramatists, though inferior in other respects to the authors of the three plays that I have considered in detail, equal them in comic scenes. The chief fault of the decadent dramatists lies in their inability to portray character, for their 'serious' characters are lifeless; but their comic ones are satisfactory, because although these lack depth, the 'humours' are well shown.

In lyrical beauty the decadent dramatists achieve some distinction. The quality of their verse, especially in songs, is uniformly high. It has a note of tenderness and wistfulness. It will not be out of place perhaps to consider here the verse of Burmese drama. The interlude was mostly in verse, for the actors were primarily singers, and perhaps because of the influence of the *Hawsa* which was a story in verse. The comic characters in the interlude seem to have used prose. The verse was of the variety called the 'four-syllabled line'. Burmese verse depends on rhyme, the number of syllables in each line, and the number of lines. In the 'four-syllabled line' verse, however, the number of lines is not fixed, and therefore a passage can be of any length, provided it has only one rhyme scheme. Each line has four syllables (as Burmese is monosyllabic, each syllable usually means a word). The first line contains a syllable which rhymes with those contained in the second and third lines. But the third, if it is a 'key' line, will contain another syllable which rhymes with the fourth and fifth lines, or fifth and sixth lines. The following diagram will perhaps make it clear:

```

- - - a
- - a -
- a - b 'key' line
- a - -
- - b -
- b - -
- - b -
- b - c 'key' line
- - c -
- c - -

```

The 'key' line with two rhymes need not occur at regular intervals. Although the first 'key' line in a passage usually occurs before the sixth line, it is quite common for the next 'key' line to occur as late as the sixteenth line. It will be seen that the purpose of the



'key' lines is to link the various rhymes of the whole passage. This rhyme scheme is the basis of the 'four-syllabled' variety of verse, but more elaborate schemes are used, especially in U Pon Nya's *Paduma*. The translations of the Siamese plays were mostly in prose, except in songs, which of course were in all varieties of verse. The verse of the interlude was formless and experimental, and U Kyin U is credited with giving form and strength to it. He did not use any prose, for there was no need to do so as he wrote no comic scenes, which the audience of the day would naturally expect to be in prose. For his verse he used the 'four-syllabled' variety, but he introduced variations into it. Sometimes he used a slightly elaborate rhyme scheme, and often he used five or six syllables in one line, thus relieving the monotony that naturally occurred in long speeches. The artistic quality of U Kyin U's verse was its strength, and one may well call it 'U Kyin U's mighty line'. He treated specially of heroes and heroic deeds, and the verse suited his plays. U Pon Nya retained the 'four-syllabled' verse, but he took great liberties with the number of syllables, and often he made his lines contain seven or eight syllables. He was also very fond of using a line containing only three syllables. He used elaborate rhyme schemes, pleasing to the ear, with a musical effect comparable to that in Spenser's *Epithalamion* and *Prothalamion*. The following scheme, taken from the speech of Paduma's princess in which she makes love to the criminal, will perhaps give an idea of the elaborateness:

-	-	-	a			
-	-	a	-			
-	a	-	b			
-	-	-	c			
c	-	b				
-	b	-	d			
-	-	-	a			
-	-	a	a			
a	a	-	d	-	-	
-	d	-	-	e	-	-
e	-	f				
f	-	b	-	x	y	z
-	-	g	a			
g	a	a	a			
-	a	-	-	x	y	z

U Pon Nya had many comic scenes which were mostly in prose, but not always. He was so fond of rhyme that he often used it in his prose. As his verse often had seven or eight syllables in one line, and as his prose contained rhymes, sometimes it was difficult to say whether a passage was in prose or in verse. *The Water-seller* was mostly in that half-prose, half-verse style. The decadent dramatists retain the four-syllabled verse, but following U Pon Nya, they use variations. Their songs, however, are in all varieties of verse. Whether in song or in dialogue, they attempt to convey not strength, but pathos and tenderness. Their prose, in contrast, is very bare and therefore suited to their comic scenes. The history of the style of verse in Burmese drama may perhaps be made clear by a reference to the Elizabethan drama. U Kyin U was a Marlowe, U Pon Nya a Shakespeare, and the decadent dramatists are Fords.

Because of the great similarities, one is tempted to compare the decadent Burmese drama with the decadent Elizabethan drama. In both there is the same love of pathos, sentimentality, and horror. To take examples off-hand, Ford's *'Tis Pity She's a Whore* and our 'Baboon Play' touch on incestuous love in order to arouse both pity and horror, and the execution scenes in *The History of Thaton* and the 'Baboon Play' are comparable to the assassination scenes in Webster. The love of spectacle is common to both decadent dramas. We even find in the Burmese decadent drama a sentimental attitude towards kingship and royalty comparable to the attitude of some characters in Beaumont and Fletcher's *The Maid's Tragedy*. The similarities are so evident that one wonders whether there is a similarity too between the causes of the decadence, whether the chief cause of the decadence in Burmese drama was because it had spent itself out in the hands of U Pon Nya and his contemporaries in the same way as the Elizabethan drama could be considered to have exhausted itself in the hands of Shakespeare and his contemporaries. But, as far as it is known, the age of U Pon Nya is not comparable to the age of Shakespeare, for Burmese drama, even during U Pon Nya's time, did not equal the Elizabethan drama in spontaneity or intensity. In spite of the fact that there were many imitators during his lifetime, U Pon Nya is the one dramatist of his period that we now remember, which seems to show that there was no outburst of national dramatic energy. And he was not a Shakespeare, and had by no means exhausted the possibilities of the drama when he was executed. Moreover, Burmese decadent drama is

indeed very far below its Elizabethan counterpart in artistic achievement.

After the publication of the Second Part of *Saw-phay and Saw-may* early in 1883, the decadence went on unchecked. Even the able author of that play, as has already been pointed out, became totally decadent in his *Tin-tin and Khin-khin*. The learned dramatist of the 'Baboon Play' abandoned his scholarly attempts to preserve with modifications the earlier tradition of the drama and became totally decadent also. By the end of 1883 the drama had become so formless and chaotic that plays ceased to be printed. And by the beginning of 1885 dramatic productions and the drama had gone back to the thrall of professional actors, and sunk again to the low levels from which it had been temporarily rescued by the scholar-dramatists. In the winter of that year, Britain declared war against the Burmese kingdom for the third time, and on 1 January 1886 the annexation of the whole country was proclaimed. The British annexation gave the final blow to the dying drama, for Burmese drama, from the beginnings to the days of the decadence, was mainly dependent on the king's court. The court had introduced the *Rama* play from Siam, it had inspired Myawaddi, U Kyin U and U Pon Nya, and even when it was in eclipse towards the end, its mere existence inspired the scholars of the decadent period, though living under another rule, to fan the dying embers of the drama into flame. The language of the drama was akin to that of the court, the chief scene was usually the palace, and at least one king figured in a play. Men's minds connected the drama with the court, and when the court fell, the drama fell with it. Of course, the end of the kingdom caused chaotic conditions to prevail in other branches of Burmese literature, for the court had always been their patron also, but they recovered after a few years. It was the drama alone which had no recovery. The British annexation in its effect on Burmese drama is comparable to Cromwell's closing of the English theatres, for both events gave the death-blow to decadent and already dying dramas. But in England the theatres were opened again, and though the 'old' drama was dead, its tradition could inspire, to a certain extent, the rise of the Restoration drama. In Burma there was no Restoration and a new drama did not arise. Though after the first shock of the annexation, dramatic performances were revived all over the country, they were entirely in the hands of professional actors, who did not produce any new plays but only distorted the old. And

had the rise of a new drama been possible, I believe that it would have been something akin to the English Restoration comedy, for a comedy of 'humours' was developing rapidly in the decadent period, even though it was subsidiary to sentimentality and pathos. But I am wandering into the realms of pure conjecture, which is inexcusable in a work attempting to be scientific.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE AFTERMATH

#### 1. DRAMATIC PERFORMANCES AFTER THE ANNEXATION

THE proclamation of annexation of the whole country as a province of the Indian Empire on 1 January 1886 came as a surprise to the people, for although it was realized that the end of the Burmese kingdom was inevitable, the general expectation was that the British would turn Upper Burma into an internally independent state of the same pattern as the native states of India. It was indeed a great shock, and the country was plunged into chaos. The old order was at an end, and men did not know what the new would be like. Many felt that the nation had been finally destroyed, and rather than accept the changed conditions, they chose to fight desperately and then die on the scaffold. Completely bewildered by the events, they fought without unity or organization, for the throne around which they had usually rallied was no longer in existence. The resulting guerilla warfare brought disorder and suffering to the whole country until 1890 when tranquillity was restored. The country went back to normal and entered upon a new period of prosperity. Literature flourished again and dramatic performances were revived all over the country.

The professional actors were left supreme in the field of dramatic entertainment and, unhampered by critical scholars, they followed their own ideas of what a dramatic performance should be. Singing and dancing and theatrical effect were all that they considered important. A play was only to be a framework for song and dance, and even dialogue was of no importance to them. They made no attempt to revive or even preserve the 'old' drama, nor did they try to model a new one on it. They used the 'old' plays or their own imitations of them as a framework for controlling loosely the course of their performance. There was little interest in the actual play. For one thing, it was never acted right up to its conclusion. During the performance certain songs and dances had to be repeated again and again on the audience applauding persistently, while the play itself stood still. So when

dawn broke and the audience dispersed to work, at the most only the first half of the play had been shown.

The continued contact with the outside world further elaborated the stage scenery. The great development was in the lighting. Even during the decadent period, the stage was lit only by feeble oil lamps, but now powerful battery and arc lamps were used. Coloured lights played on the dancing actors and actresses, to the great delight of the audience. The developments in stage technique which would have been beneficial had the drama been alive, were wasted in the hands of the actors.

The people themselves neglected the 'old' plays. U Kyin U and U Pon Nya seemed to belong to the dim past and even the decadent plays which flourished but five years previously seemed to be far away, for much had happened in the intervening years. Scholars continued to read and study the plays of the two great masters, but they were read more for their prose and poetry than for their dramatic merit. The reason why the 'old' drama was so completely forgotten is not far to seek. It was because of the popularity of the novel. When the Siamese drama was introduced into Burma, the Siamese court romances were introduced along with it, and for a time, at court, they rivalled the plays. The Burmese court dramatists wrote many imitations of the romances, and thus the Burmese novel was born. But, as the drama increased in popularity, the novel was soon forgotten. Again, when the court drama had lost its freshness, the Birth Stories of U Awbatha, which were in many ways novels, became popular, but the coming of U Kyin U regained for the drama its popularity, and checked any further development of the novel. The later history of the novel I do not profess to have studied—the subject is outside the scope of this thesis, and no one has as yet written on it—but I think that after the annexation of Upper Burma, by which time many Lower Burmans had been educated in English schools, English and English translations of European novels began to influence the Burmese novel. In about 1889 or 1890, there appeared the famous *Maung Yin Maung and Ma Mai Ma*, a brilliant adaptation into Burmese, by an unknown author, of an English translation of *The Count of Monte Cristo* by Dumas. And from that time onwards until 1919 when the English short story began to be imitated in Burmese, the novel was extremely popular and satisfied the people's interest in character and incident that had developed the drama. As has been stated, the non-existence of the throne prevented the rise of a new drama, but it was the

popularity of the novel which discouraged the people from reading the once-famous plays and caused the 'dead' drama to be forgotten.

Yet the dramatic performances were popular everywhere, and in the circumstances, 'matinee idols' adored by their admirers soon appeared. These popular actors and actresses were admired purely for their dancing and singing. The result was to put the play yet further into the background. When a performance started, the audience clamoured for their favourite actor or actress, and during scenes in which he or she did not appear, it went to sleep. Three of these popular 'stars' became exceptionally famous; Aungbala, Sein Kadon, and Po Sein.<sup>1</sup> When Aungbala died in 1910, his funeral at Mandalay was similar in nature and incident to that of Rudolph Valentino, the cinema actor. These three led famous troupes of their own and toured the country, which on the whole tended to lower even further the dramatic performances in artistic value. For example, Sein Kadon danced with little electric bulbs all over his dress, and Po Sein had two English ex-soldiers with rifles standing motionless on each side of the stage whenever he appeared. There is no denying that there had been threats against his life by supporters of rival troupes, but I do not think that the rifles were quite necessary. In any case, the fact that he was guarded by two live English ex-soldiers impressed the audience, increased his prestige, and enhanced the theatrical effect. Such 'playing to the gallery' by the actors further prevented the possibility of any revival of scholarly interest in the dramatic performance. Moreover, as rival supporters spread tales of immorality and bad conduct among those actors whom they did not favour, the prejudice against the profession increased in intensity among the more conservative Burmese. And by about 1900, the performances could claim at the most only a distant relationship with the drama of U Kyin U and U Pon Nya.

## 2. THE ENGLISH DRAMA IN BURMA

If we put the Sanskrit, Elizabethan, and Burmese dramas side by side, we find that the Elizabethan and Burmese have much in common, both differing greatly from the Sanskrit.<sup>2</sup> Of the Sanskrit drama Dr A. B. Keith says:

<sup>1</sup> Po Sein was decorated later by the Government. See chap. viii.

<sup>2</sup> Apart, of course, from the fact that the Sanskrit drama is classical in language and in age.

(a) 'The drama bears . . . essential traces of its connexion with the Brahmins. They were idealist in outlook, capable of large generalizations, but regardless of accuracy in detail, and to create a realistic drama was wholly incompatible with their temperament. The accurate delineation of facts or character was to them nothing; they aimed at the creation in the mind of the audience of sentiment, and what was necessary for this end was all that was attempted.'

'Kalidasa, greatest of Indian dramatists, experiences no uneasiness at the structure of life or the working of the world. He accepts without question or discontent the fabric of Indian society.'

'Admirable as is Kalidasa's work, it would be unjust to ignore the fact that in his dramas . . . he shows no interest in the great problems of life and destiny.'

'Fascinating and exquisite as is the *Çakuntala*, it moves in a narrow world, removed far from the cruelty of real life, and it neither seeks answer, nor does it solve, the riddles of life.'

(b) 'Idealist as it is, the spirit of the drama declines to permit of a division of sentiment; it will not allow the enemy of the hero to rival him in any degree . . . Equally effectively the drama banishes from the possibilities the conception of a struggle of conscience in the mind of the hero or the heroine; if this were represented, it would create a similar struggle in the mind of the audience, and destroy the unity and purity of the sentiment, which is the part of the drama to generate.'

(c) 'The plot is a secondary element in the drama in its highest form, the heroic play or *Nataka*. To complicate it would divert the mind from emotion to intellectual interest, and affect injuriously the production of sentiment.'

'To the Brahmin ideal individuality has no appeal . . . and indifference to individuality necessarily meant indifference to action, and therefore to plot.'

Therefore, to realize the essential difference of Burmese drama from the Sanskrit, one has but to remember: (a) the realism in U Pon Nya and some element of it in U Kyin U, their character studies, the connexion between their plays and the political problems of their times, U Pon Nya's interest in the destiny that controlled the action in *Wizaya*; (b) U Kyin U's sympathy with Parpahein, Daywagonban, and Kaywut the villains, U Pon Nya's interest in the struggle in the mind of the water-seller; and (c) the dramatic doctrine that the essence of technique was in the smooth, logical, and clear unfolding of the plot. Though much lower in achievement, Burmese drama is similar in nature and in aim to the Elizabethan drama, and its development from religious 'miracle' to 'interlude', the influence of the Siamese-modified classical Sanskrit drama, the interest of a court composed of learned men of action, the



blending together of the 'people's drama' and the court drama in the hands of U Kyin U, the continuation and fuller achievement of his aims and ideals in U Pon Nya, and the decadence have their counterparts in the history of the Elizabethan drama. Yet whereas the Elizabethan drama as represented by Shakespeare has influenced the remnants of the Sanskrit drama to give birth to a new and vigorous national drama in India, it has failed to confer such a benefit on Burma.

Although Kalidasa flourished long before decadence set in, by the tenth century A.D. in the Sanskrit drama, remnants of it lived on, and still live on, in India. The best plays of Kalidasa and other classical dramatists were often performed right through the centuries to the present day, though with 'popular' modifications. In Bengal, the *Rama Lila*, an open-air performance of the *Rama* legend, was the chief dramatic entertainment until recent times. Once the study of English institutions and literature had taken root and spread all over India, Shakespeare was not only translated and read, but also put on the stage, with modifications to meet native and 'popular' tastes.<sup>1</sup> Once Shakespeare had been successfully introduced, other dramatists followed as a matter of course, and the English drama began to influence the Indian stage.<sup>2</sup> And in Bengal, helped perhaps by the awakening of a national consciousness somewhat comparable to that which gave Ireland the Abbey Theatre, a new and intensely living drama came to be well established by the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

In Burma the 'old' drama was not preserved on the native stage by professional actors. When the first Burmese translations of Shakespeare—of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello*—appeared in a Burmese magazine in 1912, the actors had so far removed themselves from the drama and the scholars, that presentation of the translations on the stage was never thought of, and was perhaps impossible. The great disservice the actors did to Burmese dramatic development was the dismissal from their theatre of the drama that had given them their occupation, for had they retained but some remnants of the great plays of U Kyin U and U Pon Nya, or even the decadent ones, English drama could have influenced those remnants and created a new drama. Without a theatre, the translated Shakespearian drama.

<sup>1</sup> C. J. Sisson, *Shakespeare in India*.

<sup>2</sup> R. K. Yajnik, *The Indian Theatre*.

<sup>3</sup> Guhathakerta: *Bengalee Drama*.

could not and did not achieve success, even though the translator was the learned scholar and journalist, U Shwe Kyu.<sup>1</sup> The translations went unnoticed, and as the magazine became defunct in 1913, the precious issues which contain them are now available only in some libraries. After this failure to introduce Shakespeare into the vernacular, no further attempt was made, and Burmese is one of the very few civilized languages into which the plays of the great dramatist have not been successfully translated.

In 1919, after the Great War, a wave of national aspiration swept over Asia, and Burma was affected by it. With the resulting revival of interest in Burmese institutions, the study of U Kyin U and U Pon Nya has become again popular, not only in schools and colleges, but all over the country. In schools following the established educational practice of prescribing Shakespeare's plays as textbooks, the plays of U Kyin U and U Pon Nya are now so prescribed. The newly established Rangoon University, founded by the Government in 1920, the Burma Research Society<sup>2</sup> and the Burma Book Club— institutions founded by the British Government and University officials interested in Burmese history and literature, encouraged and led to the study of Burmese literature, including the drama, side by side with the English. And when adaptations in Burmese of a play by Molière and another by Tchekov appeared in 1928 in the magazine of the Book Club,<sup>3</sup> there were hopes that a new drama was in course of being developed. But the study has been from the beginning independent of, and unconnected with, the theatre of the professional actors, who are in great demand and still popular with the majority of the people. Therefore the interest in the drama, even though spread beyond the university walls, remains academic rather than practical. And as far as I can see, there are no signs of the coming in the near future of a new national drama.

<sup>1</sup> The magazine in which the translation appeared was the *Shwe Kyu Magazine*, and U Shwe Kyu was its founder and editor.

<sup>2</sup> The Text Publication Committee of the Research Society has published U Kyin U's *Daywagonban* and *Parpahein* with editorial notes, contributing much to our knowledge of the dramatist.

<sup>3</sup> The adaptations were from English translations of the two plays. English is the only medium of contact with the western drama for the Burmese, and, as in India, the influence of other European literatures can come only through English channels.

## CHAPTER VII

### BURMESE DRAMATIC PRACTICE

#### 1. THE ACTORS

As Burmese plays were presented to the public by two different classes of performers, actors and puppets, it is necessary to consider each class separately.

Before the decadent period and the arrival of European influences a raised platform as stage was never used by the actors. Their 'stage' was an open space in the centre of the orchestra, around which the audience sat. Both the performers and the audience stood or sat on mats laid on the ground. In rare instances, a low fence of bamboo marked the space on which the play was to be enacted. At court or at the houses of officials, it was slightly different. There, from a special apartment, the floor of which was raised about two or three feet from the ground, the nobility looked down on the actors, behind whom were the members of the orchestra, and behind the orchestra, the audience sat. There was neither curtain nor green-room, and the actors got ready and waited for their parts sitting among the members of the orchestra, in full view of the audience.

The stage scenery consisted of only a tree branch to represent a forest, and a property box to represent the throne. The imagination of the audience had to supplement the inadequate stage scenery. The poetical language and the orchestra helped the audience to visualize the scene. The translations given below in the appendixes will make it clear how artistic the descriptions of scenery in the plays are. To take an example off-hand, the alchemist's description of the forest in the closing scene of *Parpahein* is indeed beautiful.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Cf. The Elizabethan drama. 'The Elizabethan drama, being without scenery and elaborate stage apparatus, made its appeal to the mind rather than to the eye, and used language as the main instrument by which the imagination of its audience was aroused and satisfied. This familiar fact goes far to explain the essential intellectual character of the Elizabethan drama, and the wonderful literary power of the great dramatists.'—*Cambridge History of English Literature*, vol. VI, p. 328.

The orchestra, in the intervals between scenes, played a tune appropriate to the next scene: a royal march for a throne-room scene, a 'battle tune' for a martial scene, a 'woodland tune' for a forest scene, and so on. The tunes were so well known that the audience recognized them at once. The orchestra also played in the middle of a scene, when certain actions could not be satisfactorily represented, as in *Parpahein*, scene 7, where the brothers were supposed to be climbing the palace-walls, and in *Paduma*, scene 4, where the hero was presumed to be swimming in the river to rescue the criminal. The costumes of the actors were picturesque, but not more gorgeous than those of the Elizabethans. They wore appropriate court dresses. The king in full regalia when holding an audience, the ministers in their velvet gowns, the princes and princesses in gold and jewels appeared striking, but except for the material which was silk, the dresses were not expensive, for the seeming gold and jewels were all imitation. Masks were worn for special purposes. Ogre, *naga*-dragon, *galôn*-bird, had masks of their own, which the actors representing them wore. When an ogress was supposed to have assumed human form, the actress representing her raised the mask on to the forehead, making the face visible. A soldier on horseback or on an elephant was represented simply by an actor in uniform holding a dummy horse's head or elephant's head. Actors taking the part of gods wore shining dress, which was traditionally believed to be worn by all gods. The dresses were not the creations of actors. The court dresses of course were copied from those actually worn at court, but the dresses of gods and other spirits and the masks were copies from the stone images which had adorned the platforms of pagodas even before the rise of Pagan in the eleventh century. Perhaps it is not irrelevant to mention that Burmese dramatic performances, in spite of the dependence on the music of the orchestra, were not like masques, for the stage scenery was not elaborate. In this connexion, it should be mentioned that the Burmese actors used the mask purely for the purpose of representing certain characters, and masked dancing was unknown.<sup>1</sup>

An acting troupe consisted of actors proper and members of the orchestra. Women were freely admitted to the troupe, but they were all actresses. Playing in the orchestra was deemed to be a man's

<sup>1</sup> In Siam, even at the present day, the king has special dancers who perform in masks. Masked dancing, for religious purposes, is also known in Tibet.

part, although there was no stage convention preventing women from taking it up as a vocation. The head of the orchestra was also the head of the troupe. He was the most learned and experienced member, and he was responsible for the organization and financial outlay, paying more or less fixed wages to the others, and taking the profits himself. When engaged for a performance, the troupe was paid by public subscription or by some philanthropic person, usually an official, and therefore no charge for admission was made, all being welcome to it. The Burmese actors as a class, unlike their Elizabethan counterparts who could endow a College of God's Gift or buy a coat-of-arms, were poor. But they never starved, for even the poorest villages would welcome and feed them on their wanderings all over the country. The troupe was one large family, and the children of the members accompanied it. In spite of the prejudice against them and their poverty, the actors loved their art, and enjoyed the performances themselves.

There were many conventions connected with the stage, and they can be divided into two classes: those imposed on the actors by themselves, and those imposed by the fear of becoming unpopular with the audience.

The actors never forgot that they were originally spirit-dancers, and therefore they had conventions by which they showed their indebtedness to spirit worship. Before the performance offerings of food were made to the thirty-seven *nats*. As a curtain-raiser, there was a performance by a dancer or chorus of dancers. Each wore a red cloth round the head—the sign of a spirit worshipper. Singing invocations to the *nats* and dancing the appropriate dances, they asked for protection by the spirits, while the orchestra played a bar from each of the thirty-seven *nat* tunes. It was supposed that if this convention was broken, disaster would befall the troupe, the performance would prove a failure, and the actors would become mad; but often these conventions had been known to be broken, accidentally or otherwise.

The actors were looked upon as irreligious and immoral, and on the slightest excuse, they were in danger of being considered profane. Therefore, as has been stated, they took over the conventions from the *Nibhatkhin*. The Buddha was never impersonated, and an *arahat* or saint only when absolutely necessary, and then by an able and 'serious' actor, who had to keep a fast that day. Not even a mild joke was to be made against the Buddha or an *arahat*, although even monks and the religion itself could be the butt of a clown's wit. But

of course there were limits to the latitude allowed to him. The neglect of these conventions was supposed to result in disaster to the troupe and the death through diarrhoea of the actor who took the part or cracked the joke, and it would certainly result in the whole troupe being beaten by the audience and then put in prison by the officials. On the whole, the charge of irreligiousness attributed to the actors was not justified, and throughout the years, they had never been known even to attempt to evade the conventions. There were also conventions connected with social decorum. Kissing was not allowed on the stage. Although no penalty, supposed or real, was attached to it, this convention has never been broken. The actors could wear reproductions of all the regalia of a king, except the golden shoes, which only the king himself and princes in the line of succession could wear. The breaking of this rule was supposed to result in the death by diarrhoea of the actor who wore the shoes, but it was not punishable as a crime if they were actually worn on the stage, and it is known to have been broken sometimes. All the conventions, including those connected with spirit-dancing, still exist at the present day.

During the decadent period the platform stage, the elaborate scenery and curtains were introduced from French and English sources, for French touring companies often performed before the court towards the close of Mindon's reign (1853-78), and from about 1870 English touring companies of actors often visited Rangoon. With the performances of these companies of European actors, the general public had no contact. At the court the king and a few courtiers, out of respect for the French embassy, witnessed presentations of French operettas, but as they did not understand French and the actors could speak no Burmese, the court found the performances boring at times. At Rangoon the English actors presented musical comedies, or more truly, musical shows, to an audience composed entirely of English residents. It must be stated that the touring actors did in no way introduce specimens of the French or English dramas, for what they presented were third-rate musical shows. But they did introduce some examples of western stage-craft, and the Burmese professional actors, ever on the alert for borrowings, copied wholesale the platform stage, the curtain, and the elaborate stage scenery, with the result that, during the decadent period, the Burmese stage came to be a copy of the European stage. At Rangoon a permanent theatre was even built, a thing unknown to

Burmese drama before, and most of U Ku's plays and *The History of Thaton* and *Saw-phay and Saw-may* were produced at that theatre. Admission to a performance was by payment, a practice alien to dramatic performances before the decadent period. The rise of 'matinee idols' resulted in the chief actor, instead of the leader of the orchestra, becoming the head of a troupe of actors. Formerly, a dramatic performance took place during the afternoon or early evening, but now because of the repeated applause for the popular 'idols', a performance lasted throughout the night.

I have stated how the prejudice against professional actors increased rather than diminished through the coming of popular actors or actresses and the resulting rivalry between different troupes. But the prejudice was gradually overcome through the efforts of one man, Po Sein, who used to perform with two ex-soldiers standing beside him with rifles. By about 1912, his reputation as a leading actor was firmly established, and from that time onwards he concerned himself with raising the prestige of his profession by destroying the bitterness and the ugliness that had crept into it. By his charm of manner and personality, he soon established himself as the undisputed leader of the profession. His generous gifts to charity and irreproachable conduct soon acquitted the profession from the charge of immorality and irreligiosity. During the Great War he contributed much to the Red Cross Fund. For his services to charity and his profession, he was given a title by the Government in 1919. Such an honour had never been given before to an actor (had such a thing happened under the Burmese kings or even before 1914, the officials would certainly have vehemently protested, taking it as an insult to their class), and the Government's action was the final denial of the old dictum that actors and beggars were outside the pale of good society.

## 2. THE PUPPET SHOW

According to common tradition, the Burmese puppet show came into being long before the drama, but as our knowledge of the history of the puppet show before the reign of Bodawpaya (1782-1819) is meagre, perhaps it will be better to consider first the puppet's history from that reign.

It will be remembered that, as stated in Chapter II, Bodawpaya, under whom the court and the 'people's' dramas united together to give rise to a national drama, created a new ministry, that of the stage. The new minister, being a conservative courtier, wanted the drama

to be under the direct control of the state. But as living actors were now past such control, he turned his attention towards puppets, which were in great demand by the people. He realized the possibilities of puppets in the newly arisen national drama. The puppet show, which was then entirely independent of the drama and the living actors, started with different animals coming out one by one, and each gave a special dance to a particular tune of its own, played by the orchestra, then a *zawgyee*<sup>1</sup> appeared and danced, and finally, a prince and princess came out, made love, sang and danced. The puppets were from 2½ to 3 feet in height, and were worked by strings. As stage, there was a raised platform, with a black curtain, behind which the show-men stood and manipulated the puppets. The men's hands were visible, but as the platform was about four feet high and the audience had to look up, the hands did not distinctly come into the line of vision. The platform was about twenty feet in length, and the width of the part in front of the curtain was about four feet.

The minister put the puppet show under direct state patronage and control. Under him the puppet show became similar to an ordinary dramatic presentation except that puppets performed instead of living actors. The use of puppets to act the play of course caused the introduction of new puppets, but it also rendered the *zawgyee* and animal puppets unnecessary; yet they were retained all

<sup>1</sup> *Zawgyee* is the Burmese term for an alchemist. It is a derivative of the Indian word *yoga* but the Burmese alchemist has little in common with the Indian ascetic. It is an example of how names of Pali and semi-Buddhist origin were applied to already-existing native ideas.

A man (but not a woman) becomes a *zawgyee* when he has introduced into his body the right metal-compounds. To obtain those compounds, he has to experiment on metals with quicksilver or iron. In the first case, he becomes a 'quicksilver *zawgyee*' and in the second, an 'iron *zawgyee*', but both have the same powers. A *zawgyee* lives for millions of years, and can travel in the air, in water, or under the earth, for his body has reached the state when it is beyond the ordinary laws of nature. A halfway stage in the experiments is reached when a 'stone of live metal' (equivalent to the medieval 'philosopher's stone') is obtained. A person in actual possession of the stone can fly in the air and travel under the earth, but his powers are entirely dependent on the stone, i.e. his body is still an ordinary human body. The stone turns lead into silver and brass into gold. It will be seen that a Burman striving to become a *zawgyee* has much in common with the medieval European alchemist.

The beliefs connected with the *zawgyee* are still widely current. For a detailed account of Burmese alchemy, see the writer's 'Alchemy and Alchemists in Burma' in *Folk-Lore*, December 1933.



the same. Therefore after the minister's innovation, the puppet show was actually a combination of two different things, the old puppet show as seen in the animal puppets coming out to dance, and the new puppet play. To many people it must have seemed that the minister did not really introduce any new thing, but only lengthened and made more elaborate that part of the show devoted to the prince and princess. It should be remembered that the Burmese had no puppet drama. In India, in Java, in Siam, in Bali, and in Turkey, there was an actual puppet drama, but in Burma the puppet show was entirely dependent for its plays on the drama of living actors. The minister imposed two restrictions on the puppet show. First, the plays presented by puppets must either be founded on the *Jatakas*, or on the great events in the nation's history. Second, the dress, manners, and customs of the king and his court presented on the puppet stage should be correct in every detail.

The innovations of the able minister resulted in the rise of a new class of puppet show-men. They were mostly drawn from the ranks of the professional actors, but they were of proved ability and experience, and had to serve at least some months of apprenticeship. The show-men were never looked down upon, and the living actors themselves held them in respect. The puppet show-men were very conservative. State control ended with the death of the minister, perhaps because his successors were not so able; but the show-men kept their stage exactly the same as it was in the time of the minister, except that they presented the plays of U Kyin U, most of which were founded neither on the *Jatakas* nor on historical events. During the decadent period, the puppets stuck to the 'old' plays, and introduced no innovations either in stage-craft or in dramatic technique. The annexation by the British in 1886 was disastrous to the puppet show, for, unlike the living actors, the puppets were almost totally dependent on court patronage. When the country became peaceful again by about 1885, the puppet show-men made gallant attempts to revive their shows, and all over Burma they gave performances. But the show belonged to a dead past, and the conservatism of the show-men would not allow the introduction of anything new. The old show-men died out, and there were not many new-comers, for the profession demanded a term of apprenticeship and its conservatism did not suit the young men, products of the changed conditions. The result was that the puppet troupes gradually disappeared. In 1921, when a puppet performance was given at

Pegu, many English officials asked to be my father's guests, for although they had been some years in Burma and heard so much of the puppet show, they had never been able to find one. In 1929, on inquiry, I found that there was not one puppet troupe in Lower Burma, though there were two in Upper Burma; of these, only one was giving performances occasionally, the members of the other being content to earn their living by some other means.

Before considering the probable history of the puppet show before the time of Bodawpaya, it is necessary to give an account of the puppet-shadow show of the east. The home of the puppet show was India. Pischel in *The Home of the Puppet Stage* even contends that the Sanskrit shadow drama preceded the drama proper, but that theory is not accepted by Dr Keith and other scholars. From India, with Hindu expansion overseas, the puppet-shadow show spread, together with the epics and the drama, to Malaya and the East Indies. In Java it found a permanent home, and there shadow drama is still very popular. From Java it spread to Siam and other countries of Indo-China, to Persia, Turkey, Arabia and Japan. Perhaps it even spread to Europe; at least the English Punch is a direct descendant of the Turkish puppet Karageuz, who himself was a descendant of the Sanskrit puppet Vidusaka. To give an idea of the puppet-shadow show, I will give a description of a Java shadow performance.

As 'stage' there is a huge curtain with a light behind it. The puppets are put between the light and the curtain, on which their shadows are thrown. 'The light shines through the transparent material of which his (the puppet's) many-coloured garments are made. His shadow on the curtain glows with such bright hues within the framework of dark shells that he looks like a figure in stained glass. . . . In the middle of the huge curtain is seen a fantastic vine with interlacing branches. Monkeys and birds climb on it, and beneath it two grim guards stand watch. When the play begins, the strange shadow tree vanishes. The stage manager is the *Dalang*. He sits on a mat and gives the play.<sup>1</sup> Back of him is the orchestra to accompany the explanations of the *Dalang*. Whenever a new figure enters the orchestra plays. The men in the audience are allowed to sit on the right of the *Dalang* and see the actual puppets perform, and the children sit at the *Dalang's* left hand. But the women are not permitted to see the real puppets act. They see only the shadows on the

<sup>1</sup> i.e. he recites the words of the play.

screen. The transparent sticks (tied to the side of the figures) that guide the actors do not show on the screen.<sup>1</sup> The shadow shows of other countries are essentially the same as in Java, except that (1) 'the fantastic vine' is not found anywhere else, (2) the audience, men and women, see only the shadows, and (3) the faces are not distorted as in Java; but this is because with the Mohammedan conquest, the Javanese had to get over the religious difficulty. The Mohammedan religion does not allow the reproduction of the human form in any way, and therefore the Javanese puppets came to have distorted bird-like profiles, and the Turkish puppets were held high enough for the heads of their shadows to be a little bit cut off, so that it could not be said that they were real reproductions of the human form. In Bali and in Siam, where the old Sanskrit-Hindu culture has remained up to the present day, the faces of the puppets are human.

How far was the Burmese puppet show under the influence of the shadow play? The question must be answered with reference to its history only before Bodawpaya, as it is obvious that after his time the show could not be and was not under any foreign influence.

That there was no direct influence of the Sanskrit and East-Indian shadow drama is certain because (1) a shadow show of any sort has never been known to the Burmese, and (2) the introduction of anything directly connected with the shadow show would bring with it semi-Sanskrit plays founded on the epics, upon which the East-Indian shadow drama was dependent, but as we have seen, no such plays were ever brought into Burma. In this connexion Sir William Ridgeway's theory that the puppets first became known to the Burmese when the 'Indian historical plays' were introduced, falls to the ground as no such plays were ever introduced. And (3) although a descendant of the Sanskrit puppet Vidusaka, whether he be called Punch or Karageuz or by some other name, is found in the East Indies, Turkey, China and other countries where the shadow drama had spread, there is no such puppet in Burma.

The question whether there was any indirect influence at all is difficult to answer, and I dare not venture to express a definite opinion. I give below evidence for and against the possibility of such indirect influence. The balance of probability would perhaps seem to indicate that the Burmese obtained some idea of their puppet show from the shadow puppets of their neighbouring countries. Just as the decadent actors could borrow some ideas of European stage-craft

<sup>1</sup> Madge Anderson, *The Heroes of the Puppet Stage*.

without ever knowing or caring for the European drama itself, the Burmese may have borrowed their puppets and puppet stage-craft, without ever caring for the shadow drama itself. Such borrowings were possible although the shadow drama itself never reached Burma, for Burmese trading or raiding expeditions were in continuous contact with Siam, and to a lesser extent with Malaya and the East Indies.

1. (a) The Burmese puppets are worked in delicate detail, and are similar in this and other respects to the Javanese and Siamese figures.

(b) But the Burmese puppets are worked by strings, whereas most other eastern puppets are moved by sticks from below. However, some puppets of India and China are stringed.

2. (a) The Burmese puppet show-men make offerings to the spirits before a performance. Such offerings are also made in Java before the presentation of a shadow play.

(b) But, although the offerings are not made particularly to the thirty-seven *nats*, it may be that the puppet show-men, who consider their calling to be just a branch of the acting profession, are only following the custom of the living actors.

3. (a) The puppet show begins with dances by animals, which are perhaps reminiscent of the Javanese 'fantastic vine' with birds and monkeys on it. A monkey appears among the Burmese puppets.

(b) But Burmese folk feasts occasioned mimicry of animals, and that practice may have influenced the puppet show. Moreover, the Burmese animal puppets consist, in addition to the monkey, of the tiger, the elephant, and the horse. The *sawgyee* has no counterpart in the Javanese show, and the Burmese show has no bird puppets.

4. (a) Burmese women are not admitted to membership of a puppet troupe, and are not allowed to step on the puppet stage, even when no actual performance is in progress. Is this reminiscent of the Java show, where women are not allowed to see the actual puppets perform?

(b) But the practice may have been only an attempt by men to reserve the profession for themselves.

5. (a) An appropriate tune to identify a new animal puppet is played in Burma. This is perhaps akin to the Javanese practice of identifying a new figure that has entered by the orchestra playing a special tune.

(b) But the practice of identifying a new scene (which is almost the same as identifying a new figure) by an appropriate tune has always existed in the performances of living actors, and the puppet show-men may have borrowed it.

# APPENDIX I

## THE RAMA PLAY<sup>1</sup>

The following extracts from the *Rāmāyān of Valmiki*, *The Statue* play attributed to Bhasa, and the Siamese-Burmese *Rama* illustrate

- i. the difference between the demon-king of the epic and the demon-king of Sanskrit plays; and
- ii. the indebtedness of the Siamese *Rama*, for its portrayal of the demon as a boastful villain, to the Sanskrit plays founded on the epic, other than to the epic itself.

### From THE RAMAYANA<sup>2</sup>

*The DEMON in the guise of a hermit praises the beauty of SITA, who is surprised and alarmed at this unusual behaviour. He now announces himself.*

With knitted brow and furious eye  
The stranger made his fierce reply:  
'In me, O fairest dame, behold,  
The brother of the King of Gold,  
The Lord of Ten Necks my title, named  
Ravan, for might and valour famed.  
Gods and Gandharva hosts I scare;  
Snakes, spirits, birds that roam the air  
Fly from my coming, wild with fear,  
Trembling like men when Death is near.

. . .

What, O thou large-eyed dame, hast thou  
To do with fallen Rama now,  
From home and kingdom forced to fly  
A wretched hermit soon to die?  
Accept thy lover, nor refuse  
The giant king who fondly woos.

<sup>1</sup> This play has been considered in chap. ii.

<sup>2</sup> Translation by R. T. H. Griffith, *The Rāmāyān of Valmiki*, reproduced by permission of Messrs E. J. Lazarus & Co., Benares.

O listen, nor reject in scorn  
 A heart by Kama's arrows torn.  
 If thou refuse to hear my prayer,  
 Of grief and coming woe beware ;  
 For the sad fate will fall on thee  
 Which came on hapless Urvashi  
 When with her foot she chanced to touch  
 Pururavas and sorrowed much.  
 My little finger raised in fight  
 Were more than match for Rama's might.  
 O fairest, blithe and happy be  
 With him whom fortune sends to thee.'

Such were the words the giant said,  
 And Sita's angry eyes were red.  
 She answered in that lonely place,  
 The monarch of the giant race:

'Art thou the brother of the Lord  
 Of Gold, whom all the world adored,  
 And sprung the illustrious seed,  
 Wouldst now attempt this evil deed?  
 I tell thee, impious Monarch, all  
 The giants for thy sin will fall,  
 Whose reckless lord and king thou art,  
 With foolish mind and lawless heart.  
 Yea, one may hope to steal the wife  
 Of Indra and escape with life.  
 But he who Rama's dame would tear  
 From his loved side needs despair.  
 Yea, one may steal fair Sachi, dame  
 Of Him who shoots the thunder flame,  
 May live successfully in his aim,

And length of day may see;  
 But hope, O giant King, in vain,  
 Though cups of Amrit thou may drain,  
 To shun the penalty and pain  
 Of wronging one like me.'

The Raksha monarch, thus addressed,  
 His hands a while together pressed,

And straight before her startled eyes,  
 Stood monstrous in his giant size.

[SITA is then put on the flying car and taken away.]

From THE STATUE PLAY<sup>1</sup>

*To where RAMA and SITA dwell, the DEMON-KING comes in the guise of a hermit, and discusses with RAMA the various funeral rites for his dead father, the king. The DEMON-KING tells of a special kind of deer which would be suitable for sacrifice, and RAMA leaves to look for such a deer, leaving SITA alone with the seeming hermit.*

SITA (*aside*). I am parted from my lord and now I am afraid.

RAVANA (*aside*). Rama removed by guile, I shall carry off from the hermitage the weeping damsel Sita left lonely like an offering devoid of sacred stanzas.

SITA. I will just go into the hut. (*Begins to go.*)

RAVANA (*taking his own form*). Sita, stay.

SITA (*fearfully*). Oh! Who is this?

RAVANA. Dost thou not know me?

I conquered in the battle Indra and the other gods with hosts of demons. When I saw my sister's mutilation and heard of both my brothers slain I beguiled Rama with my ruses; he is matchless in his strength, but his wits are dulled by pride; and I have to carry thee off, large-eyed lady—and I am Ravana.

SITA. Oh, Ravana! (*Moves away.*)

RAVANA. Ah, once in Ravana's view, whither will you go?

SITA. My lord! Save me, save me! Lakshmana, help! help!

RAVANA. Sita, listen to my heroic deeds.

Indra did I smash and made Kubera tremble. Soma dragged I in the dust and thrashed the child of the Sun. Ho! A fig for them. They're frightened gods that live in heaven. Blessed is the earth where Sita dwells.

SITA. My lord, protect me! Lakshmana, save me, save me!

RAVANA. Run to Rama for protection or to Lakshmana, or, if thou wilt, to Dasaratha the king in heaven. What boot these coward's words? Can fawns assail a tiger?

SITA. Save me, my lord! Help! Lakshmana, help!

<sup>1</sup> Translation by A. C. Woolner and L. Sarup, *The Thirteen Trivandrum Plays*, reproduced by permission of the University of the Panjab.

RAVANA. Why this lament, large-eyed lady? Count me as thy lord. This Rama with all his mighty strength and a host of gods to help him is no match for me.

SITA (*angrily*). Thou art accursed.

RAVANA. Ha, ha, ha! See the fire in the virtuous wife.

When I sped rapidly aloft the Sun's rays could not burn me.

Now her few words, 'Thou art accursed', make me burn.

[SITA is then carried off in the flying car.]

*From the Siamese-Burmese RAMA*

*The doe cries, 'Lakshmana, help!' SITA, thinking that RAMA is in need of help, presses LAKSHMANA to go. The DEMON-KING in the guise of a hermit enters with a begging bowl. SITA comes out of the magic circle to offer him some fruit, whereupon the seeming hermit praises her beauty. She is alarmed at this unusual behaviour in a hermit, yet tries to appear calm. But the hermit takes her in his arms, making her cry in terror.*

DEMON-KING. Hello, Mistress Sita. Ha, ha, my lovely blue-white wasted her affection on a useless old hermit. Ha, ha, I am not a hermit. Respect for a seeming hermit must soon change to love for the king of the giants, with crown and jewels and armour. I must show my true form, I cannot waste time. Ho, my lord of the orchestra, play me a tune to help me change into the king of the giants with ten crowned heads. . . . (*The orchestra plays and stops.*) Hello, oh, my little girl! Now you can see my true nature, my true form, my true beauty. Ha, ha, I am the king of the giants that was among the suitors for your hand at the test of the bow. Ha, ha, I have loved you since we were young children. Have you forgotten your childhood, sweetheart? Look at your lover, you cannot forget your lover of childhood days, my little love, my lovely little bundle.

SITA. Oh, alas, my lord, my lord! Oh, oh, if he were only a man pretending to be a hermit, I could argue and plead with him. But he is our ancient enemy. My lord Rama, my love, my life, save me, save me! My golden breast is in pain. My golden heart is quaking. I am dying, I am fainting, my lord, my protector!

DEMON-KING. How are you feeling, my little sister? Darling, you cannot forget your suitor of bygone days. Don't you know the saying, 'However good the new one may be, one longs for the old?' Surely, my little maid, you haven't forgotten your true love?

SITA. Oh, oh, I cannot stand your insults, you evil spirit, you



demon! Oh, oh, I am afraid of you, you giant, you beast! Do not stand there insulting me, taunting me, sending sly glances at me. Oh, oh, where can I escape, how can I escape, from this danger? I shall soon die.

DEMON-KING. Come on, come on, Mistress Sita! Surely you will hurry! Please don't stand there wasting time. Your big and rightful husband will soon be here, and surely you do not wish to put your secret lover, your paramour, your new husband, in danger? Ha, ha, you are only afraid of Rama, and so you are trying to appear the virtuous wife. At heart, you wish to be happy with a new love, but you are afraid of your husband's wrath. That doesn't matter. Come with me, I will give you happiness, and you needn't be afraid of your husband. Come on, come on, your stupid old husband will soon be here. Let us love and enjoy and be happy in the air, in the sky. Ha, ha, this little prince will take you in his arms, my little maid. We shall float gently in the air and fly over palaces of gold and jewels, and listen to the sweet music of the golden bells. Be not afraid, I can conquer Rama. Come on, love! [SITA is forced into the flying chariot.]

## APPENDIX II

### *MAHAW*<sup>1</sup>

BY U KYIN U

U Kyin U differs greatly from U Pon Nya in that he does not encourage the comic spirit in the drama. The following scene, the most humorous in his plays, is one of the rare attempts to raise a laugh among the audience.

*Enter Mahaw's men and start to pull down the mansion of the queen-mother.*

*Enter in haste a maid-of-honour.*

MAID. Rude rascal, rough rogue, man as stupid as an ox, criminal destined to have his body pierced with repeated punishment! What do you think you are doing? You are trying to imitate the insect who rushed at the candle-flame, bold through blindness. Now, don't be short-sighted, don't be stupid! This is the abode of the queen-mother, do you not know? Can you not see that it is built of glass and inlaid with jewels and gilded with gold? You dirty-looking fellow, you coarsely-clad man, what do you mean by coming here armed with stick and sword, trying to pull our house down? This mansion is not yours, not your business. Now, now, do not stand there jumping with fury, with your dirty and faded-looking body quaking with anger, do not look at me with a bold and angry-looking face. I do not wish to quarrel with you. To tell you the truth, I cannot, for I am a maid-of-honour and therefore miles above you. Go away, man, go away!

MAN. What! Mistress Furious, you do look proud and hurt standing there, looking at me with sorrow and anger! Your tongue is as sharp as a dagger, and your words are as big as mountains. You are as shameless as a prostitute. Now, now, do not come and disturb me at my work. I am preparing the city for the royal visit. I represent the king, I have his authority. Why are you

<sup>1</sup> This play has been considered on pp. 57-61.

standing there? Do you think you can pierce my body with your look? You do look a sight! Your forehead is too wide, your hair-knot is too small, and your body is too thin. You seem to be a bit disturbed, you are looking anxious. Have you lost your husband and can you not find him?

MAID. Vain man, hard man, fellow whose stupidity is boundless and limitless, uncouth stranger from another city! I do not care whose authority you have, which king you represent. You are a foolish stranger from an uncivilized and backward country. My mistress, the queen-mother, will send you to the king, and then, poor, poor, ignorant countryman, you will be seized, tied with ropes, kicked, beaten, and put into prison. My friend, go away, go away, otherwise your luck will not be so beautiful.

MAN. You talk too much, my ugly, frowning woman. Your words do not fit your action. If you are so powerful, why are you standing there so helplessly? Your words are empty, your pride is great but founded on nothing, your anger can do me no harm. Do not stand there threatening me, glaring at me! Do you not know who I am? I am the leader of wise Mahaw's men, I am the captain of his guard. Minister Mahaw, the great Mahaw, the famous Mahaw. Go back, go away, do not put a lighted match to a mountain of gunpowder. Do you want to suffer grief and pain?

MAID. Fountain-head of rudeness, barbarian, wild man! A ghost is a frightful, evil, ugly being. But you are uglier than a ghost. In fact, you look like a ghost whose face has been made more villainous-looking through being blackened with soot. Hay, Mister Poverty-stricken-ghost! You are what we call a *berla* in Pali. It means a very foolish person. I am a palace-born, a dainty court-maiden. I am not a mad dog, so do not stand there with a stick, attempting to chase me away. You are indeed very insulting. Oh, I shall not argue with you any more, Captain Stupid-as-an-ox. I am going at once to our beloved mistress, the queen-mother. You wait and watch what happens.

MAN. Go on, go and tell, run and report, Mistress Cold-as-diamond-cold, you will soon be shivering with fright, mortification, disappointment, suffering. You are uncouth, uncultured, unlearned. I shall soon pound you into little bits as a cook pounds the paddy. I am the trusted slave of Mahaw, the great Mahaw, the good Mahaw, the renowned Mahaw. I am his faithful captain, gallant leader of his men. And if you want trouble, if you want some painful punishment

that will make your eyes open wide with suffering, just say some more insulting words. You are rude, country woman.

MAID. You are like the thief who, on entering a house at night and finding the owner sleeping peacefully inside, shouts, 'Help, help, I find a stranger here!' Man, you smell of the wilderness, even your voice is rough and rude. The world is indeed a strange place when there are men like you who can accuse a palace-born of being uncultured. Madman, foolish man, stupid man, your hour has come, your face will soon be distorted with heavy punishment as a wicked criminal. I go to fetch my mistress.

[Exit.]

## APPENDIX III

### DAYWAGONBAN<sup>1</sup>

BY U KYIN U

#### SCENE 1

THE THRONE-ROOM AT ZAYYABOMI

*Enter KING and ministers. They discuss affairs of state. The KING sends for the court astrologers. They enter.*

KING. My famous astrologers, Brahmins of the purest rank, men who divide and cut through the three Vedas! Please consider the horoscopes of my two sons, seedlings of the throne and the white umbrella. Work out the figures of your science, and tell me of their future.  
[*A pause while the astrologers deliberate.*]

CHIEF ASTROLOGER. Glorious king that governs this country of gold, I can foresee that your elder prince, who is heir to the throne bathed in glory as the sun, is in danger of being taken away by the ogres to their kingdom during this week. I beg that you will use extra care to guard the palace against any entry by ogres during this week, my noble lord.

KING. My ministers, my masters of white magic and black foretell the stealing by ogres of my heart, my first-born, my heir to this throne. I wish to prevent this. Guardians of my kingdom, what do you advise?

CHIEF MINISTER. Let me submit this, lord. We will make the palace and the city strong and safe by putting officers, soldiers, and guards at various points of vantage. The whole city will be divided into numerous units, each unit to be guarded by a special body of armed men night and day. Furthermore, the whole city and its approaches will be guarded by cordons of soldiers. We assume full responsibility to guard the city and our prince.

KING. My noble lords! Yes, guard the city well until seven days have elapsed. Ignore not the warning of the learned masters of

<sup>1</sup> This play has been considered on pp. 61-5.

astrology. Let the palace and my throne be guarded with men armed with arrows, swords, spears, guns and bombs. Bodies of mighty artillery-men, themselves surrounded by sword-bearing infantry, shall surround the golden city. [Exeunt.]

## SCENE 2

*Enter OGRESS.*

OGRESS. I am the pretty sister of the king of the ogres. I am very handsome, neither tall nor short. My hair-knot is lovely, my body is pure with the purity of a virgin. I am handsome, though I myself say it. I am well-experienced in the affairs of human beings. My wit is forty-fold, my cunning is thousand-fold, I have ten thousand disguises, I can change myself a million times, and my beauty is million-million-fold. I am clever, though I myself say it. I am as clever as the clever parrot of the Minister Mahaw. I can conquer all by my wit. If a person has a crooked mind, I make it straight. If a person has a long mind, I cut it short. If a person has a sticky mind, I wash it. In fact, however clever a human being is, I can cope with his wit and vanquish him. Now I must hurry to the abode of the human beings, and get myself some human flesh, for I long to eat it again. My big brother of the orchestra, please adorn my ears with your jewels.

*[The orchestra plays, and when it stops, she has arrived at the walls of the city.]*

What! Nobles and commoners, swords and spears guard the city in and out. Friend ogress, it is extremely difficult to enter the city. Friend ogress, you cannot lose your food, you cannot go back to your own palace empty-handed, you cannot go home without anything. Mistress ogress, you cannot go home without success, you cannot afford to lose your reputation. Everybody would be laughing at you. It is difficult to enter the city, but it is not impossible to do so. Use your wits, my mistress of cunning. You are the sister of the ogre-king. Steel your heart and use your wits. Ah, I have thought of a plan. I will create by my supernatural power a lovely cradle of gold, entwined with emerald necklaces, inlaid with gold. I will assume human form and seek admission to the palace with my gift of the jewelled cot. [Exit.]

## SCENE 3

## A ROOM IN THE PALACE

*Enter KING and courtiers. Enter OGRESS with the cradle which she begs to give as a present for the elder prince to sleep in. The KING accepts it, and appoints her as a lady-in-waiting and puts her in charge of the cradle and the child. Exeunt all except the OGRESS and the child.*

OGRESS. It is night now, and I will take away both the cradle and the child. Ha, ha, I am the wave of wit, mistress of cunning. Do you wonder that I am the favourite rose of my dear brother? I am the soul of cunning, the trumpeter of cunning-falsehood, the university of strange-cunning. I dare cut off my knee even, for my cunning will make it grow again. If a dead fish were to be married to me, it would become alive through my wits. As Shin Kisse, the famous monk, knew in his mind the eight volumes of Pali grammar, I know all the divisions and kinds of wit and cunning. . . . But I must hurry back to my forest, which looks half-shining, half green-gloomy. My lord of the orchestra, will you show me your wit? (*Exit with the child as the orchestra plays.*)

[*Enter KING and ministers in haste. Ministers inform the KING that the prince has been stolen. He blames them. Exeunt. In outline only, left to be filled in later on the stage.*]

## SCENE 4

## THE FOREST

*Enter OGRESS. In a soliloquy she says that she did not eat the little PRINCE but has brought him up as her own son. He is now a youth of sixteen years, but does not realize that he is not an ogre. In outline.*

*Enter PRINCE.*

PRINCE. I am the ogre-prince whose fame travels even to Mount Mayyu that is surrounded by a thousand hills. My power and glory exceed those of other ogres even. I am the ogre in whom glory flowers, whose god-given weapons number a thousand, who stands in solitary greatness among other beings. I will now wander into the thickest part of the forest, glorying in my right arm, which is studded with diamonds of strength, and inlaid with gold of power. My lord of the orchestra, please show me the way, and wet the faces of the golden virgins watching this play with tears of emotion by your music.

*[The orchestra plays while OGRESS and PRINCE walk up and down the stage. When it stops, they have arrived at a thick part of the forest.]*

PRINCE. Mother, how lovable and strange this part of the forest looks! Rocks and rocks, and rocks again. That is a pretty cave, in which a king might live in pleasure, better than his golden palace. That piece of rock over there looks just like a bush, this like a fruit tree. . . . Look at that one, it is in the shape of a dragon-snake's hood. Those rocks must contain metal-ores, and if only human beings could find this spot and work on the ores with compounds of alchemy, they would become *zawgyees* soon. Please look at that cave, mother, it is sheltered from the many-coloured rays of the sun, and how cool it appears! I am sure a *zawgyee* is laughing and smiling inside the cave . . . What a lovely, strange forest this is beloved mother.

OGRESS. Yes, my love. This is the forest where *zawgyees* and fairies dwell in laughter. The whole forest is my domain, therefore it is yours also. Come, my loved son, let us wander round the forest.

*[Exeunt.]*

#### SCENE 5

*Enter* KING OF THE GODS.

KING OF THE GODS. The carpet which is diamonded and emeralded, the carpet under the wondrous tree of paradise, the carpet on which I sit and meditate in peace, seems hard and rough. It is a sign that something in the human world is needing my attention. I must use my divine vision and look down from this Mayyu Mount.

Ah, a worthy young prince, a youth worthy to pray to attain Buddhahood, is now grown up. Because he was brought up in the lap of an ogress, because he was fed on ogre milk, he is just like an ogre. He is a worthy prince, and my duty is to honour him. I will hasten to the abode of the ogres, and give the prince a name and title.

*[The orchestra plays, and when it stops, he has arrived at that part of the forest where the ogres live.]*

*Enter* OGRESS.]

OGRESS. Friend that shines and glitters, master whose body glows with shining rays, who are you? To what species of beings do you belong?

KING OF THE GODS. Friend ogress, Mistress Princess, listen to my



words. I am the master of the gods that live in glory in the six-storeyed paradise.

OGRESS. If you are the master of great-gloried power, if you are the king that owns the topmost towers on Mount Mayyu, why have you come to this forest where I live in laughter? My lord of the six storeys, please enlighten me as to the reason for your visit to my forest.

KING OF THE GODS. Ogress, my Princess, your adopted son, who prays to be a Buddha, will soon become the ruler of the kingdom of the ogres. I can foresee that for three years he will be the diamond pillar that rules the kingdom underneath the white umbrella, for three years he will sojourn on the mountain of gold, the palace of ogres, for three years he will be the Defender of Buddhism. His fame will spread all over the universe, his power will govern the four great continents of the human world. Even now his future greatness is being foreseen by the gods, and rumours that he will be a great king are current in the towers of Mount Mayyu. I will honour him now, I will foretell his future greatness and victories, I will give him this bow, and I will give him the title of 'Daywagonban'. Let this be his name from today, and let his childhood name disappear. His flame of glory will even reach the sun.<sup>1</sup> [Exeunt.]

#### SCENE 6

*Enter DAYWAGONBAN and OGRESS.*

DAYWA. Mistress of my gratitude to whom I owe a mountain of debt greater, even than Mount Mayyu, mother that gave me birth, I do not know as yet the eighteen branches of knowledge that all princes should know. Please put me under the kind tuition of the holy hermit, who often flies in the air, the recluse that dwells in our forest, the gentle person that is always meditating and fasting.

OGRESS. My glorious and true vision, my son of valour, my child who has my life in his keeping, I will take you to the holy

<sup>1</sup> The prophecy of the king of the gods will come true, provided Daywagonban remains on the throne. Even a god's power of seeing into the future is limited, and although the king of the gods here foresees that Daywagonban will be a great king, provided he remains on the throne for three years, he does not foresee that the ogre-prince will leave the throne of the kingdom of the ogres.

hermit. You must stay as his pupil for three years. Be diligent in your studies, my beloved son.

DAYWA. We must hasten to the hermit, my master of the orchestra. When the dead body of the Buddha was being burnt on the funeral pyre, the gods played their music that was heard in all corners of the universe. Can you imitate that music of the gods?

*[The orchestra plays, and when it stops, they have arrived at that part of the forest where the hermit lives. Greetings exchanged between the visitors and the hermit. The OGRESS requests the HERMIT to take the prince as his pupil. The HERMIT agrees. Exeunt. In outline only.]*

### SCENE 7

A FOREST GARDEN, NEAR THIIYIZAYYA CITY

*Enter two PRINCESSES. They are the daughters of the king, and have come to gather flowers and play among the roses and jasmines. They talk to each other. In outline.*

*Enter HERMIT flying.*

HERMIT. I the flying hermit am on my daily round of begging. Ah, that elder princess is pretty. The sight of her handsome and desirable form makes my heart beat quickly, makes me breathe heavily. I feel dizzy, I feel like an elephant that rages for want of a mate, I feel sick with desire for her body. Oh, oh, I cannot control myself, I am going mad. I have never seen such a beautiful sight before. I feel like a Brahmin, as mad as a Brahmin.<sup>1</sup> Oh, oh, what ails my body, what ails it? I am falling, falling, falling. *(The orchestra plays and he falls down on the floor.)*<sup>2</sup> Ah, I have lost my supernatural power, for the purity of my mind was tainted with desire. But I was unable to control my body, this body of mine full of worms, this body of rotting flesh, I could not control my body as her body is so smooth and handsome and lovely. Well, well, she is worthy to be the bride of my royal pupil. I will join them in marriage and in love, and their minds should become one in happiness.

<sup>1</sup> As has been stated in connexion with Zuzaka, the villain of U Pon Nya's *Waythandaya*, the Brahmin was hated by the people, but tolerated because of his knowledge of astrology. Attacks on him, as this 'as mad as a Brahmin' of U Kyin U's, were frequent on the Burmese stage.

<sup>2</sup> A hermit attains supernatural powers by purifying his mind through long meditation. When he loses these powers through his mind becoming impure, he loses them not suddenly but gradually so that our hermit falls gradually to the ground.

[*Exeunt PRINCESSES. The orchestra plays as the HERMIT walks up and down the stage. When it stops, he has arrived back at his hermitage. Enter DAYWAGONBAN.*]

DAYWA. My learned and pure master that always shows me the path of knowledge, hermit who leads me away from the path of suffering, what ails you? Why have you walked back to your monastery in sweat and with bursting breast? This is indeed strange! Please tell me all about the happenings of the morning, my honourable tutor.

HERMIT. I will tell, open your golden ears, my princely pupil. Near the victorious city of Thiyizayya, I saw the two emerald-buds, the Princess Minkissa, and her younger sister, Marla. I was struck by the faultless beauty of Minkissa, and I became dazed with desire. I lost my supernatural power of flying, as my mind became impure. So I had to return here on foot.

DAYWA. Master of the peaceful hermitage, hermit that seeks the way to Nirvana, I did not think that a maiden could be so beautiful. Will she make a suitable queen to share my throne?

HERMIT. Pupil, prince, have no doubts as to her beauty. Your imagination cannot create her picture in your mind; wait till you see her for yourself. Her beauty was great enough to create in me impure desires which caused me to fall from the sky. She is indeed a very suitable princess for you, my royal pupil.

DAYWA. Come, I am sixteen, I have attained manhood. My glory shines as rubies, my power glows as diamonds. I am a man, I will get what I want. I will use my thunder, I will cast my net, and the princess shall be mine. This ogre, this Daywagonban, this man of prophecy, this feast of victory, this conqueror of all opposition, this prince will surely conquer the emerald Minkissa, my princess.

[*Exeunt.*]

### SCENE 8

*Enter HERMIT and DAYWAGONBAN. Enter ogre ministers. The royal uncle is dead, and the throne of the ogres awaits the return of DAYWAGONBAN. He bids farewell to the HERMIT, who leaves the scene. In outline only.*

DAYWA. I shall soon be crowned king of the ogres. But I cannot ascend my throne without a consort, for a king must have a queen to give glory to his kingdom. If I were to rule without a queen, other kings would laugh at me, blame me. My carriage, my flag, my crest would look faded and colourless. As a pleasant pond needs golden

water-lilies, I need a princess. Princess Minkissa, the queen of beauty surrounded by beautiful maids-of-honour, adorns the victorious city of Thiyizayya, that glorious city guarded by moats and men and arrows. My love is given to her alone, and I want her as my queen. My lords, hasten to her father the king, and ask him to give her to my throne.

*[The ogre ministers point out the dangers of such an embassy to Thiyizayya, as its king, who is powerful, is certain to refuse an ogre, and may even take the request as an insult. In outline only.]*

DAYWA. Stop, stop. No more arguments. Hasten and demand in the name of this ogre-king the princess Minkissa. *[Exeunt.]*

### SCENE 9

#### THE THRONE-ROOM AT THIYIZAYYA

*Enter human ministers. Enter ogre ministers.*

CHIEF OGRE MINISTER. Our friends the human ministers! We have arrived in haste from our lord, who is king of all other kings. He loves Minkissa, your beautiful princess, and wants her to be his queen. My lords, consider and meditate, and please give us your opinion as to the success of our mission. We bear a letter to your king.

CHIEF HUMAN MINISTER. You slaves, you unnatural creatures, you wild beings from the forest, are you mad, are you rude, are you insulting us? How could our emerald and gold ever marry your ogre-king? Man and ogre never mate. We never tire of gazing at our princess, we adore her. Your insulting demand gives pain to our ears. Mad ogres, leave our city at once, before our whips meet your backs.

CHIEF OGRE MINISTER. Friends, wise ministers who give always good advice! Blame us not for coming to your golden city of victories and wonders. We have no desire to insult you. We have no desire to soil the clearness of your faces. Please frown not at us, hate us not. The bullocks obey the ploughman, these ministers obey their ogre-king. We are only slaves that obey orders. We will soon leave your city, but before we dare go back to our king, we must deliver the royal epistle to your lord.

*[Enter KING.]*

CHIEF HUMAN MINISTER. Noble king, an embassy from the ogre-kingdom waits at your feet. The fame of your daughter, our princess, has spread even to the forest-country of the ogres, and their king begs the hand of Minkissa in marriage.

*[The letter is delivered. The ogre herald is asked to read it aloud.]*

OGRE HERALD. Daywagonban, who rules the many-towered kingdom of the ogres, the glorious kingdom of many god-given weapons, the mighty monarch honoured by the king of the gods himself, sends this message to his friend, the king of Thiyizayya. As a shining, glittering, glowing emerald of many green-blue rays is made even more colourful by becoming united with the gold of a master goldsmith, your heart, your breast, your royal princess, your elder daughter Minkissa, would be made more beautiful if she were joined to my throne as queen. I beg that the top-knot of pretty princesses be granted to me as queen, my friend king.

KING. What, dare the heathen ogre hope to consort with my palace-born daughter, whom people gaze upon in ecstasy? These weak ogres think that they can insult me without danger. They do not know their place. Ho, ministers, seize them all, and put them into dungeons. Let others take warning from their example.

*[The ogres are seized. But they point out to the human ministers that the persons of ambassadors are inviolable.]*

CHIEF HUMAN MINISTER. King, destined to be the master who takes men and gods over the whirlpool of suffering to the island of peace! Without doubt, these strange beings from the forest deserve to be put to death in torture, for they dared to insult this country by asking the hand of the purest-gold in marriage. But my lord, right through history, kings, future gods, never kill or otherwise molest ambassadors and heralds. Lord of my life, you are a man of many prayers in many existences, you are a man of knowledge and wisdom attained through intense industry and meditation in this and previous lives. We beg that you use your wisdom and restrain your anger.

KING. Your advice is full of great wisdom. I will forgive them and restrain my anger. But they do not deserve to remain one moment longer in this civilized city of ours. You must escort them back quickly to their natural abode, the wilderness. *[Exit.]*

CHIEF HUMAN MINISTER. Ha, ha, so you thought you would get our princess Minkissa, who is more beautiful than her lovely sister. Ha, ha, you remind me of a fellow who was wooing a married

woman, thinking she was a virgin. Never attempt the impossible, my friends, never climb where you cannot reach. Farewell.

CHIEF OGRE MINISTER. Oh, oh, we thought we would gain great praise from all the world, striving to unite our lord the king with your beautiful princess. We hoped to unite gold with gold. . . . You are like a merchant who refuses to sell in his first venture. Your goods will become stale, your princess will never get a husband.

CHIEF HUMAN MINISTER. Ha, ha, our goods are not for sale. Your king washes his hands making ready to feast on the choicest food on the table, forgetting that the meal is not for him. Farewell.

CHIEF OGRE MINISTER. We must use our discretion, we will retreat in good order. Then, when all is ready, we will use our god-given and demon-given weapons, we will use our supernatural powers, we will make the whole forest shake with thunder, all the mountains quake with our shouts. Our war-cries will be heard even on Mount Mayyu. This city and this king will soon be mere dust. The bomb shall soon explode, a match shall soon set alight the mine of gunpowder. Explosions shall soon rend the air. My lord of the orchestra, show us our way home, and imitate the sounds of explosions and trumpets blown to call soldiers to battle.

*[Exeunt human ministers, laughing and jeering, as the orchestra plays, and the ogre ministers walk up and down. When the orchestra stops, they have arrived at the forest. Enter DAYWAGONBAN.]*

Entrance to the Box of Glory, O Master of the golden arrow. We went in daring and with valour to the city where Minkissa dwells, and we delivered your message to her father the king. But he did not like us. We gave him sweets, but he found them sour. He said that you, a barbarous dweller in the forest, eater of uncooked flesh, did not deserve even to look at the princess. He sent us away at once.

DAYWA. Ah, the little kingdom insults this great ogre, titled Daywagonban by the king of the gods himself! It ought to agree to my demand, it ought to soothe my nerves, it ought to give in submission and in joy the princess Minkissa who laughs in the shadow of water-lilies, who sleeps in a golden house. . . . The tiny country has insulted me. I will destroy it by my mighty army of victorious ogres. Ministers, call the soldiers, shine the weapons. We march to Thiyizayya on the seventh day from now. *[Exeunt.]*

## SCENE 10

## THE THRONE-ROOM AT THIYIZAYYA

*Enter KING and ministers. A herald enters and announces that PRINCE THANYAWZA from the kingdom of Zayyabomi has arrived to see the KING. Enter PRINCE.*

KING. Handsome young prince of a great line, your Sun and Moon, the royal father and mother of yours, how are they? I pray every day that they may be free from the ninety-six kinds of diseases, that flying horse and marble-white elephant—omens of victory over enemies—should arrive at your city, that steady rain and wind should fill your streams and granaries, and that your people should be in peace and happiness, striving to reach the path to Nirvana. How are you, my prince? Have you learnt the eighteen branches of princely learning? How have you succeeded in your studies, could you swim to your goal?

PRINCE. My noble king, thanks to the prayers of a godlike king, the faces of my parents are bright as gold, the omens of victory dwell now in my father's stables, streams and food are in plenty, and the people are happy in the religion. I have been fortunate enough to reach the goal of my studies. I thank thee, noble king.

KING. Son of glory, right-arm of your father, listen and take my words to your heart. When you were born, my younger daughter was born too. And your royal father and I agreed by treaty that your elder brother should marry my elder daughter, and you the younger. Have you come to fulfil the agreement? But, where is your brother? Is he absent at the head of a triumphant army, with drums beating and arms flashing, conquering your father's enemies?

PRINCE. My noble lord, my royal brother is not absent in another's land. My parents often tell me his tragic story. He was stolen and taken away to be eaten by an ogress, who entered the palace disguised as a human being.

*[A gap in the dialogue. This scene is in outline only.]*

KING. Spectacles of your father's eyes! Flying Pearl! Your talk of ogres reminds me of Daywagonban. That king of the ogres sent me an embassy to demand the elder princess. When I refused, the ogres went away threatening vengeance. Soon after the ogre-embassy, embassies from two kingdoms came to demand the same princess. They too went away in anger. I am anxious for her safety. I wish you to take her away with you to your kingdom. Guard her well with your

life, my son. I give also your betrothed to you. Hasten back with your princess and your royal sister-in-law, beloved prince.

PRINCE. Be not anxious, father. I will respect and love the faultlessly handsome princess, my sister, and will protect her with my life.

*[Enter the two PRINCESSES. Enter soldiers with a commander. The PRINCE and the ladies bid farewell to the KING. The PRINCE, PRINCESSES and soldiers move up stage, and the KING, etc., leave the scene. The orchestra plays as the PRINCE and his companions walk up and down. When it stops, they have arrived at a thick part of the forest.]*

PRINCE. My valiant commander, we must rest here. Follow the regulations as set down in the war books, and rest your army. Let the infantry surround us, let the cavalry surround the infantry, let that special regiment of mighty men of valour watch the approaches to our camp. Let there be perfect silence, so that we can hear the sound of an approaching enemy. Put barricades of thorns around the whole camp, and please see that fires burn round the barricades themselves.

*[Exeunt commander and soldiers. The PRINCE and the two PRINCESSES sleep. A pause as the orchestra plays. Enter to one corner of the stage, DAYWAGONBAN]*

DAYWA. My princess as pretty as a fairy? Though eighteen regiments surround the tent where she is sleeping, this ogre honoured by the king of the gods himself, this Daywagonban of superhuman power can jump over the surrounding soldiers and get the princess. . . . When Buddha was born, thunder and the voice of the quaking earth were heard. My lord of the orchestra, can you make such sounds?

*[As the orchestra plays, DAYWAGONBAN runs, seizes the PRINCESS MINKISSA and carries her off the stage. Alarms. The PRINCE orders the commander to follow DAYWAGONBAN with his army. The PRINCE makes ready to follow. Enter FOREST-GOD.]*

FOREST-GOD. Prince born to the throne of your line, you must not be angry, you must not be too valiant, you must not roar as a king-lion roars from his golden cave. The ogre-king is not an ordinary being. He is the friend of gods, and he has a god-given bow. It can kill a thousand soldiers at once. It is impossible to fight him. Quench the fire of your anger. Save yourself and your faithful men. Retreat in order and in array, my prince.



PRINCE. Friendly god that guards the hills and the forest, I too am a powerful prince. I am a king's son born in the topmost tower of my palace. I am not afraid of any danger. If I meet a tiger, I will think that it is only a bump in the road. If I meet bushes after bushes of thorns, I will think they are made of velvet. I owe a duty to my sister-in-law. I had not been able to guard her, but I will bring her back to safety. Farewell, god.

FOREST-GOD. If you refuse to listen, you will die. Listen, Daywagonban is a powerful bowman. When he bends the bow to put on an arrow, his strength is such that his foot makes a mark in the ground big as the mark made by a wheel when the cart sinks in the soft mud. When he makes ready to shoot and takes his aim, when he beats the bow to strengthen his heart and steady his aim, he makes a noise as loud as thunder. Return, my prince, retreat to safety.

PRINCE. Friend that forever guards the hills and the forest, I do not stop for wheel marks and thunder. I am not afraid of an ogre who lives in forests and on hills and on the wild sea-shore. That ogre shall die. I will win back my lovely emerald sister. Trumpets, sound; drums, beat. We must risk our lives for our relations and our friends. Farewell, god.

*[Exit FOREST-GOD. Enter DAYWAGONBAN to a corner, away from the PRINCE, while the orchestra plays. DAYWAGONBAN is supposed to be some distance away from his pursuers, so that he cannot be seen by them. The orchestra stops.]*

DAYWA. The eighteen regiments approach with trumpets sounding. Mouse comes to cat, crow comes to arrow, fish comes to cooking-pot, the regiments come to me. I shall have to kill that master of rudeness if he insists on following me. I must set my bow, I must put on the arrow. Come on, come on. As wax gives way to the heat of a fire, the ground itself gives way to me. Look! My foot has made a mark as deep as a wheel-mark. *[Exit.]*

*[The orchestra plays and the PRINCE, with followers, including the YOUNGER PRINCESS walks on. When it stops, they have arrived at the place where DAYWAGONBAN set his bow.]*

COMMANDER. Look, look, my lord! There is the mark of his foot. The bow must be set. I have never seen such a mark made by a bowman, I have only heard it told in history and in fables . . . We

must hurry back, my prince, lest the whole army should be wiped out and killed by the ogre's arrows.

PRINCE. Commander, we cannot go back just because we find a foot-mark. Old and young would laugh at us if our army should retreat from a mark made in the mud. In dice, in cards, in war, loss and gain come in turn. We have lost our princess, and it is now our turn to win her back.

COMMANDER. I am not afraid, my lord. But beware of panic in the ranks. A single brick can sometimes scare a thousand ravens. In this army, there may be many men afraid of the supernatural. If one should run, all would run. Therefore, my lord, I beg that we should return to our city for the present. Then we will come back with regiments composed of tried men only. Let us return now, my prince.

*[Enter DAYWAGONBAN as the orchestra plays.]*

DAYWA. They are still following me. I will frighten them, I do not wish to kill them if they will retreat. I will warn them that I am all ready to shoot with my god-given bow. Now, I will tap on my bow-string.

*[The orchestra makes a noise, exit DAYWAGONBAN.]*

COMMANDER. Do you hear the thunder-like noise, prince? Have you forgotten the god's warning? The king of the ogres is making ready to shoot. Stop, stop, O son of my lord, and save your army by retreating. My lord, pity your army, consider your men, my prince.

PRINCE. Commander, when we fly a flag, we must fly it high; when we dive, we must reach the sea-bottom; when we attack, we must reach victory or death. It is too late to retreat now. Care not for the ogre with an empty title. March on, march on, to victory!

*[Enter DAYWAGONBAN.]*

DAYWA. He stops not at my warning, he comes on with his army. Ha, ha, he is surrounded by his soldiers. But my arrow can reach him. Come on arrow, come on bow, make a noise like thunder, shake Mount Mayyu itself with your noise, arrow, arrow, hit the prince.

*[Shoots and exit. The arrow hits the PRINCE, who falls unconscious. Disorder and alarm. Exeunt soldiers running on one side, and the YOUNGER PRINCESS alone on the other.]*

## SCENE 11

*Enter FOREST-GOD.*

FOREST-GOD. The prince of power listened not to my peaceful words, he cared not to remember my words of warning, and he went to attack the ogre-king with human soldiers. He and his men were going towards the deadly arrows of the god-given bow. I must hasten and find out what has happened to the bold prince.

*[The orchestra plays, and when it stops, he has arrived at the place where the PRINCE is lying wounded. He is anointed by the FOREST-GOD with magic oil, and recovers from his wounds. He realizes the folly of hatred and anger. He decides to become a hermit and dwell in the forest where he nearly met his death. Exeunt. In outline only.]*

## SCENE 12

THE FOREST

*Enter NAGA-DRAGON.*

NAGA. I dwell in a golden palace in the womb of this earth, a wondrous palace made of diamonds. I am a powerful spirit-animal. My frown can turn beasts and men into mere ashes at once. I will now go to play and look for food in that silver palace, which men call a sand-bank, near the river. My learned master of the orchestra, sound your divine drums.

*[Enter GALÓN-BIRD. The orchestra stops.]*

GALÓN. I am the king-galón who dwells on the golden tower built on the mountain top. I own the sky up to the second region. All naga-dragons quake with fear of me. Look at the feathered crown on my head, look at my pointed beak, my well-feathered wings. I look really fierce. . . . I must hasten to the silver sands near that river and find some meat and fish.

NAGA. I play in laughter on the sands, but here comes a galón. My life is in danger, I must hide, I must hide. That banyan tree over there is as huge as a palace, with its overhanging boughs. I will hide under it.

GALÓN. I see my food, and this golden galón will swoop down and catch that powerless being, that frightened naga who hides in fear underneath that banyan tree. He shall not dwell long in that tree-palace, I will soon get him. My lord of the orchestra, I will make a

sound, my swoop shall make a sound, which will disturb even the gods on Mount Mayyu. Can you imitate that sound?

*[The orchestra plays. The GALÓN's beak misses the NAGA and strikes the tree, which is uprooted.]*

What have I done? I have destroyed the sacred tree, the banyan tree under whose cooling shade hermits sit and meditate. . . . Our Lord attained Buddhahood under such a tree. I have sinned a great sin, I am afraid. But I did not intend to destroy the tree-monastery. I will assume human form, and ask the holy hermit that dwells near here, whether I have sinned or not.

*[Enter PRINCE, now a HERMIT.]*

Flower of a throne, prince-hermit who lives in piety and searches the path to peace, because of the enmity between *nagas* and *galóns* that has lasted through the ages, I tried to fight a *naga*. I tried to catch him as he hid under that monastic tree. I missed him but felled the tree. Who is responsible for this outrage? Have I sinned a great sin? Please enlighten me, my learned hermit.

HERMIT. Listen, mighty spirit-bird. The *galón* did not intend to destroy the tree, so he is not responsible. The *naga* also did not intend to cause the destruction of the tree by hiding under it. He is also free from responsibility. Both of you are free from blame, my pupil bird. *[Exit GALÓN.]*

NAGA. In trying to save my life, I have indirectly caused the destruction of the tree-monastery. If the hermit should be angry with me, danger and distress will befall me. I must hasten to ask his forgiveness.

*[The HERMIT tells the NAGA that he is free from blame. The NAGA thanks the HERMIT. Exeunt.]*

### SCENE 13

*Enter HERMIT. Enter YOUNGER PRINCESS. She has been hiding in fear of the ogre. She is relieved at finding the PRINCE. She begs him to become a layman again, but in vain. Arguments and tears. She then demands the safe restoration of her sister to her. She suggested that as he was made responsible by her father for PRINCESS MINKISSA's safety, he should at once leave the tree-monastery and search for her. The HERMIT, in despair, wishes aloud that the NAGA were there. Enter NAGA.*

HERMIT. Oh, friend *naga*, please listen to me, please help me.

Please find out by your powers the fate of my sister-in-law, whose beauty makes her a kinswoman of goddesses. Please try your best to bring her here if she should be still alive. Fight the ogres, cheat the ogres, and bring her back to safety.

NAGA. My lord and master, be not anxious. If she is alive, I will steal the fairy-like princess with all the six kinds of handsomeness. I will steal her from the ogres, I will take her away from ogre-land.

*[The NAGA moves up-stage, HERMIT and PRINCESS leave the scene, and the orchestra plays. When it stops, the NAGA has arrived at that part of the forest where the ogre-city is situated.]*

Oh, this is an imposing city. This is indeed worthy to be the capital for the great Daywagonban to dwell in. Look at the well-fortified turrets on the high walls, look at the iron gates. Moats surround the city. Here are gates for soldiers to come out and attack besiegers, over there are gates for soldiers to re-enter the city after an attack. Those must be shelters for bowmen, these are corners for spearmen. Look at those gardens and parks, look at these ponds and lakes in which the water-lily sleeps. A wide river flows through the city, dreaming of the forest-clad mountain-sides down which it has come. From the drum-towers, sweet drums tell the hour. Towers in gold and silver vie with each other in height. Is it the city of gods, is it the abode of human kings, or is it only an ogre-city? But wherein is the difference? Yes, a handsome city, an artistic creation of the ogre-brain. But I must not lose time by admiring their city. I must use my powers and hide myself to watch.

*[Enter DAYWAGONBAN, ogre ministers, and PRINCESS MINKISSA.]*

DAYWA. She is under my power, in my hands, yet she has persistently refused my love. What sort of a merchant is she? Her goods are worthless, they ought to adorn a broken-down cottage. Yet she refuses to sell them. I will force the obstinate seller to part with her wares. I will make her sell all I want, and all at my price. Ho, ministers, put Mistress Thickhead into an emerald casket, lock her in it, and put it in a deep dungeon. Let her suffer for seven days, let her mind become weary with despair. Then she will yield.

*[Exit. PRINCESS MINKISSA is put in an emerald casket, and the casket is put in the dungeon. Ministers leave the stage.]*

PRINCESS MINKISSA is now supposed to be underground.]

NAGA. Ha, ha, I know where they have put the golden princess, queen of grace. I will go into the ground, and travelling in the

bosom of the earth, I will soon get the jewelled case with the sweetest jewel in it. Ho, orchestra, make a big noise, let all ears be tortured for some moments with loud noises while I steal my princess. *[Orchestra plays and stops.]*

Ha, ha, ogres, ogres, I have got the emerald casket with the princess in it. Now I will hasten back as swift as the flying horse whom the ogre Ponaka rode in bygone days. My lord of the orchestra, can you imitate the sound made by horses' hoofs?

*[The orchestra plays, and the NAGA moves up-stage carrying the emerald casket. When it stops, he has arrived back at the hermitage. Enter HERMIT and YOUNGER PRINCESS. The NAGA delivers the casket, and when it is opened MINKISSA comes out. Joy and relief. The HERMIT thanks the NAGA, who leaves. Exeunt.]*

#### SCENE 14

*Enter HERMIT and PRINCESSES. The speeches are in lyrics to be sung.*

PRINCESSES *(together)*. Youth who wishes to travel on the path to Nirvana, are you not too young to make the journey? Use your golden common sense. You are too young. Come back to your city. Lovely prince, your gold umbrellas and your gold towers await you. Wait in peace in the shadow of your palace until you are older, then go on your journey.

HERMIT. I need the gold umbrella of meditation, not the gold umbrella of pleasure. My palace is this tree. I wish not to go back to my city.

MINKISSA. If you wish to meditate and seek the way to peace, you must do so in a safe and peaceful place. This wilderness is full of dangers. Come back to your city where you can meditate free from worry, free from care.

HERMIT. When enemies and dangers come, I will offer the sweetest flower of loving-kindness, I will bathe them in the cool-clear waters of forgiveness. Say farewell to your brother, and return to your towered city.

YOUNGER PRINCESS. Love, your princess is tired of trees and wild ponds. Let us go back to our golden palace and towers, my prince. You are too young to live in the forest. Come with me.

HERMIT. Younger and elder, my princesses, your words are sweet: they jewel my ears. But I do not wish to go back. I am now only a hermit, dweller in golden caves, not golden palaces.

MINKISSA. Listen to our words, follow our advice, grant our pleadings. Come back with us.

HERMIT. My heart quakes with fear at the thought of re-swimming the river of pain and disappointment. I care not for golden glory, golden throne. My palace is this forest.

PRINCESSES (*together*). But the forest cannot be your palace. You are too young and the forest is too full of dangers. Come back to the city where you can pursue your religion in peace and safety.

HERMIT. I am not afraid of dangers. Death comes to us all, and I have to die one day, whether I dwell in the city or the forest.

PRINCESSES (*together*). You are too young to be tied with the ropes of King Death. Come back with us. You are a prince destined to rule in glory.

HERMIT. I care not for glory, my sisters, my ladies. It is useless to try to make me go back. . . . I have escaped from the pain of striving to attain worldly glory. I will now strive to be able to row you in the raft of peace to the everlasting Peace.

[*Exit HERMIT, followed by PRINCESSES.*]

## SCENE 15

### THE FOREST

*Actually, three scenes, each representing a different part of the forest, are being shown simultaneously. Of course, the three groups of actors are not supposed to see one another.<sup>1</sup>*

*In the centre of the stage is the tree under which the HERMIT usually dwells. The emerald casket is still there. HERMIT and PRINCESSES enter and sit under the tree. On one side is another tree. A TREE-GOD comes and sits under it. On the other side, DAYWAGONBAN and his ministers enter.*

DAYWA. It is now seven days since I put our obstinate visitor in the dungeon. She must be in great terror now, and ready to yield. She must now be repenting that she was so obstinate. Release Minkissa, my ministers, release the rose-bud, the faultless-handsome.

<sup>1</sup> It will be seen that U Kyin U, in this play and the next, often (1) shows two scenes simultaneously, and (2) asks the audience to suppose that the groups of actors do not see each other although all are visible to the audience. U Kyin U was a pioneer in stage-craft. In his first play, *Mahau*, following

*[The ministers inform DAYWAGONBAN that the dungeon is empty.]*

DAYWA. Ha, ha, a mere astrologer fights the gods, a mere human princess tries to run away from Daywagonban. Woman who refuses to love me, where are you? I will shout. My shout shall reach her ears. You fool, you wretch, dare you run away from me? There can be no escape from my power; you will be caught, you shall be caught.

*[He shouts. The PRINCESSES hear the voice and run. The TREE-GOD puts them inside the trunk of his tree.]*

She depends on her two legs, I on my supernatural powers and god-given weapons. Foolish woman that runs away from my love, you shall be punished. My lord of the orchestra, trained in a university of musical learning, show me the way, and help me in my search for the princess.

*[The orchestra plays, and when it stops, he has arrived at the tree-hermitage. He sees the emerald casket, and the foot-prints of the PRINCESSES. He decides to follow the foot-prints, which lead him to the TREE-GOD. In outline only, to be told in a soliloquy by DAYWAGONBAN.]*

DAYWA. Brother Tree-god, I am looking for my wife. I see that

the interlude, there was no division into scenes. In his later plays, he introduced the innovation of dividing a play into scenes. However, as he was the pioneer, he was often uncertain of his scenes. But, even when he was showing simultaneous scenes, he was careful that they should relate to one big scene, i.e. they should represent different parts of a forest, or different parts of a palace. Contrary to practice in the interlude, he never showed one scene representing a forest simultaneously with another representing a palace, or a palace-scene of one city with another such scene of a different city. Simultaneous scenes were abandoned by the dramatists and the living actors, with the coming of the realist U Pon Nya. But the puppet show-men, more conservative than living actors, have retained up to the present day the simultaneous scenes, even when the puppets are presenting U Pon Nya's *Wizaya*. The show-men also retained the practice of the interlude in showing a forest-scene simultaneously with a palace-scene.

But even U Pon Nya retained some remnant of the earlier practice when gods were being represented. When an actor taking the part of a god appeared, he was supposed to be on Mount Mayyu, the abode of the gods, and although he was supposed to see the other actors representing human beings, it was assumed that he was invisible to them until, as the orchestra played, he walked up to the other actors. This practice was deemed not to be against realistic effect, as in real life also a god is believed to be invisible to human beings until he goes to them and makes himself visible.



the trail of her foot-marks ends at your tree. Now, now, it is very dangerous to hide my wife from me. I am a powerful ogre. If you dare insult me, I will soon make you wander homeless in the forest, like a slave.

TREE-GOD. Listen, you powerful ogre of the forest. I do not care whether you lose or find your wife. I care not for your affairs. You are very rude in accusing me, a perfect stranger, of eloping with your wife. You must be a blind cock, looking for a hen that has followed another. . . . Ha, ha, you remind me of a complicated case in a court of law. A slave was sued by a man in the court of a clerk of law. The man's own mother came and defended the slave. Now, now, let me alone, do not put me in your complicated case, I cannot be like that mother, I cannot defend your wife, and I cannot defend you either.<sup>1</sup> Brother, poor little brother, go home.

DAYWA. Brother god, do not say insulting words, do not crack jokes. My wife's foot-marks abruptly end underneath your tree. You cannot escape by mere denial. You are not a defendant in a court of law. No arguments will save you. Where is my wife? Answer me quickly. Although you are a god, you are not the son of the king of the gods. I can punish you, I will punish you.

TREE-GOD. My master of courtly language and polite manners! Collector of revenue from such powerless beings as ghosts and demons, you cannot frighten me, my lad. I care not for your wife that has left you because you are a mere animal-spirit. It is no good threatening me, I am not afraid of such beings as you. This tree is a shady banyan tree. Men come here to rest, breaking their tiresome journey through the forest for a few peaceful moments of relaxation. I am not responsible for their footmarks. Go home, lad. Do you want some banyan flowers? I am an honourable god, I never steal wives.

DAYWA. You minor-god, you slave-god, you dare laugh at me, and mock me? I am not the son of a merchant, I do not care whether your tree is an open market where men and cows and horses come to trade. I want my wife, and I will look under every leaf of your tree for my wife.

TREE-GOD. You big brother of little spirits, you spirit afraid to go near a place of worship, is this your tree? Just touch a leaf and you will see what this loving brother of yours can do.

<sup>1</sup> The meaning is not clear. I think it is a reference to a contemporary law-suit.

*[In a soliloquy, the TREE-GOD decides, as DAYWAGONBAN will not go away, to put magic dresses on the PRINCESSES which will make them look like ogresses. He does so. He gives DAYWAGONBAN permission to search the tree. The two PRINCESSES come out. DAYWAGONBAN thinks that they are ogresses, and begs the TREE-GOD for forgiveness. Exeunt TREE-GOD and the PRINCESSES still wearing the magic dresses. In outline only.]*

DAYWA. Aha, that wicked sham hermit has my wife. I know it, I knew it, when I saw the emerald casket lying open near his tree. I will punish him. The golden tower, which man calls the sun, is now hanging on the side of Mount Mayyu, tired with its journey to the human world and back. Its lights will soon be extinguished. But now it is shining like a ball of cotton on fire, for its guardians are polishing its golden turrets to make the flying jewelled-tower ready for another journey at dawn. My lord of the orchestra, we must hurry to catch the hermit before the sun has completely set.

*[The orchestra plays, and when it stops, he has arrived at the hermitage, where he finds the HERMIT.]*

You sham hermit, who spend your days in chewing chicken bones, instead of studying your religious books, you have hidden my princess. I know it. I put her inside an emerald casket in a dungeon, but I lost both her and the casket. I find the latter near your tree. Where have you, to whom have you, sent my princess? If I do not find her, I will kill you.<sup>1</sup>

HERMIT. Listen, Daywagonban, I did not send your princess away anywhere. I did not help her to go away from here, and I have given her to nobody. I cannot produce her. But I am not afraid. If only my death will give you satisfaction, and give peace to the forest, I am ready to die. But grant me but seven days to live. I wish to meditate and prepare for my death. I promise on oath to come to you on the seventh day from now.

*[DAYWAGONBAN agrees to give him seven days' grace. Exeunt.]*

<sup>1</sup> Of course, he does not realize that the hermit is his former enemy, the prince.

## SCENE 15

## ANOTHER PART OF THE FOREST

*There is a cave on one side. Enter PRINCESSES. They are tired with trying to get back to civilization. They go into the cave to rest. Enter KING with ministers.*

KING. My ministers, gods of wisdom, we have arrived at the cave built in memory of my elder son, who was stolen away by ogres. It is seven days since we were here last. Enter and see that the cave is fit for pious persons to meditate in, polish the gold, emboss my coat-of-arms on the walls, put lovely and sweet-smelling flowers on the floor. *[Ministers go to the cave and then come out.]*

CHIEF MINISTER. My lord, we have strewn the floor with flowers, we have lit wax candles. But, my lord, we found, on the bed-throne on which you usually sit and meditate, two ogresses fast asleep.

KING. My darling son was stolen by an ogress, who entered my palace with evil guile. Since then, I have blunted my love for all ogres. Every day, I swear at them, I pray against them, I increase my hatred for them. Lords, catch the two sparks of danger, capture the two ogresses.

*[Ministers enter the cave and come out with the PRINCESSES. They look like ogresses as they are still in their magic dresses.]*

CHIEF MINISTER. My lord, here are the two ogresses who dared to sleep in the candle-lit and sweet-flowered cave built in memory of your son.

KING. My son, my heir to the throne, was stolen through cunning. An ogress stole him. Now I can have my revenge. Waste not your time, my ministers, by trial and expositions of criminal law. I order that they be chained to the execution post. Let them be tied and chained. Let them live in torture for some days, only to die later.

*[The PRINCESSES are tied as ordered. Exeunt all except the two PRINCESSES.]*

PRINCESSES. Oh, oh, what sin did we commit in our previous lives to suffer thus? Oh, it is cruel to be in a foreign land, it is terrible to die by foreign hands. . . . Oh, we must not die like this, how could we? History will call this a rude episode if we are not rescued. We poor sisters, we poor women! Our country, our people, where are you! Father, Father, we raise our hands in prayer, will you not come

and save your helpless daughters? We are not ogresses, we are human princesses. Oh, oh, who will go and tell the truth to the cruel king?

[*Enter two goddesses.*]

FIRST GODDESS. We are the goddesses that guard the two handsome and noble princesses, women as valuable as silver. Their father-in-law thinks that they are ogresses and will kill them soon. Sister, we must hasten and save our wards from pain and death.

[*The orchestra plays as the goddesses walk towards the PRINCESSES. The PRINCESSES ask them who they are.*]

SECOND GODDESS. Smile, laugh, be happy, princesses. We are your unseen guardians that lead you on paths of virtue. We will soon fetch the prince-hermit, who will tell his father that you are his daughter-in-law and you her sister. [Exeunt.]

## SCENE 16

### THE FOREST

*Enter HERMIT. Enter GODDESSES.*

GODDESSES (*together*). Oh, oh, lord. Listen, young prince who has followed the example of the hermit Maydaryi and dwell in peace in the gray-brown forest, with trees washed in mist and dew, we are the goddesses who guard the two princesses, we guard and love them as their mother, now dead, loved them. We have come in haste as the two maidens are in great danger and pain.

HERMIT. I know who you are now, but I do not know how my diamond-princesses are in pain. Why are they in pain? Are they being put to death because of some crime? Are their bodies a-weary with pain?

GODDESSES (*together*). Oh, oh, lord! Listen, little Buddha-bud who adorns himself in flowers of piety. The princesses look as if they were ogresses. Your father, maddened by love of his elder born, hates all ogres, and thinking the two princesses to be those hateful beings, has put them in chains.

HERMIT. I hear. But how did they come to look like ogresses?

GODDESSES (*together*). Oh, oh, master. Listen, hermit, heir to a throne, who strings the flowers of piety and meditation. A tree-god, to save them, put magic dresses on the two gold-buds, making them look like ogresses. But he forgot to take the dresses off. The two beauties are now as helpless as little sparrows caught in a strong net.

The only person who can save them is you, young prince, for you alone can tell the truth to your father, because to you alone will he listen.<sup>1</sup>

[*The HERMIT decides to go and save the PRINCESSES, but he remembers that he will have to deliver himself to DAYWAGONBAN at dawn, for seven days have elapsed. He now hastens to DAYWAGONBAN to ask for a day's grace. Exeunt. In outline.*]

## SCENE 17

*Enter DAYWAGONBAN and ministers. Enter HERMIT.*

HERMIT. O king of the ogres, owner of the flying chariot, master of thunder which shakes the whole universe! As I promised, I deserve to die tomorrow at dawn. But I have two friends in great danger. Unless I save them, they will die. King, I beg in humility that I be given one day's grace to enable me to journey to my friends in trouble and in pain. (*Aside*) I must sing him verses, jewels of the ear, honey-sweet food of the ear. I must beg in sweet verses and humble words, I must beg a day's life so that my princesses should live. Great king, I care not for death. I am not afraid to die. I know I shall have to die sooner or later at your hands. But I must save my two friends. Only a few moments ago, two goddesses came and told me the news that death is swiftly approaching my loved friends. Please do not waver, king, let me go to save life. I swear to come back to die at once.<sup>2</sup>

DAYWA. You cunning little hermit. As death approaches, you think of all excuses, you speak false words. . . . Seize this false hermit, my men. Tie him to a post, with his head downwards. When the golden glass-tower stands in the middle of the sky tomorrow, I will kill him. My cook shall cook me a delicious midday meal.

MINISTERS. My lord, my king. How could this hermit harm you ever? He has done no harm to you, has given you no insult. If he has spoken false words, he has done so only because he was maddened by fear of death. Please let him alone, lord, let him dwell in his tree-monastery, let him go his pious and harmless way.

<sup>1</sup> Even if the dresses were taken off now, it would be of no avail to save the princesses, as the king would only think that the ogresses had assumed human forms.

<sup>2</sup> Of course, he could not tell the ogre-king who his friends were, as then Daywagonban, learning the whereabouts of the princess, would go and steal her again.

DAYWA. Your words enter not my ear. If he were a pious hermit, he would have come here to his death, without flinching, without fear. This is no hermit, but a cunning fellow. This is no master of learning, this is only a sham hermit. Stop your arguments, do as I order you. [The HERMIT is seized and bound with ropes.]

HERMIT. I am not afraid to die, but before I die I wish to see my mother. O mother, O father, all my dreams of giving you the cool water of religious truth are now shattered. . . . I am not afraid of death, I am not frightened of torture. Even Shin Mauggalan, the famous saint, had to suffer torture. . . . But, my friends, my sisters, little ladies, pretty princesses, how are you going to escape from pain and death? Oh, oh, use your wits, my little mistresses, use your wits, use sweet words, and strive to escape without my help. Oh, oh, I am all upside down, my heart, my breast, my intestines are all topsy-turvy, they hurt me so. . . . Oh, oh, you king of the gods, you king of the golden mountain, Mayyu, can you not see me? Will you not save many lives? Have you forgotten us? Friend, king of the gods, who rests at the foot of the paradise-tree on a carpet inlaid with gold and adorned with jewels, oh, mighty king of the gods, I ask your help, I ask your help. . . .

[Enter KING OF THE GODS to one corner.]

KING OF THE GODS. Why is my carpet, usually softer than cotton wool, why is my carpet of rubies and emeralds, why is my gold-and-silver carpet so hard? It is as hard as stone. Oh, it is a sign that someone pious needs my help. I must look down the mountain side. . . . Ah, Daywagonban, whom I honoured by giving a title, is determined to kill his brother with his mighty bow, to kill the holy hermit. Mad ogre, he is as Daywadat, who tried to kill the master of gods and men. That ogre must not kill a holy man. I must guard against any insult to religion. I must warn the ogre-king. My followers of gold, my gods who bear the proud title of Umbonwala, my gods who laugh and play on the tips of clouds! (Enter some gods.) My four faithful gods, O masters of rain and clouds! The ogre-king is going to kill a pious hermit, thinking him to be a sham one. Send some thunderbolts, make the terrible noise of thunder, let lightning rend the sky. The ogres will take the signs as warning, they will realize that they are ill-treating a pious hermit.

LEADER OF THE RAIN-GODS. As you order, noble king, we will rend

the sky with lightning, the air with thunder. Daywagonban shall realize that he must not ill-treat a pious man.

[*Thunder and lightning. Exeunt gods.*]

CHIEF MINISTER. Lord, lord, can you hear the storm? The lightning shows up fierce clouds, the gods are angry at our laying our hands on a hermit, a kinsman of the lord himself. . . . Listen to the thunder, look at the sky lighted up with lightning. Look, look, lord, it is as bright as noon. Quick, oh quick, my king, order that the pious hermit be freed at once.

DAYWA. You test my patience. No more words to my ears. This hermit stole the lovely inmate of the palace. Now he has come here to tell tales. I shall punish, I will punish, I will kill this crooked hermit, when the round sun comes at dawn to drive away darkness and rain. I will sleep now, disturb me not.

[*Enter KING OF THE GODS.*]

KING OF THE GODS. He will not take warning from the signs in the sky, he sleeps caring not for angry gods. At dawn he will kill the hermit, his own brother. I must put this magic sash on him. He will then realize and remember that he is a human being. He will lose his ogre-teeth, his ogre-anger. I must hurry and make him repent. He will then realize that the hermit is his brother, he will know that his royal parents are mourning their absent and lost sons.

[*The orchestra plays and when it stops, the KING OF THE GODS has arrived at where DAYWAGONBAN is. The KING OF THE GODS puts the magic sash on DAYWAGONBAN. He wakes up and realizes the truth. He frees the HERMIT, and greets him as brother. He decides to leave the world and become a hermit also. He asks his brother to hasten home with him to free the PRINCESSES and see their parents. Afterwards, the two brothers will come back to pursue the path of purity in the forest, the scene of their suffering and strife. Exeunt. In outline only.*]

## APPENDIX IV

### *PARPAHEIN*<sup>1</sup>

BY U KYIN U

#### SCENE 1

##### THE THRONE-ROOM

*Enter KING and ministers. They discuss affairs of state. The KING announces his desire to retire to a monastery. But he has not as yet decided on a successor. There are three sons, the eldest and youngest being the sons of the chief queen and the other, the son of the queen of the 'northern wing of the palace', who is of low birth but the favourite of the KING. Enter to an extreme corner, away from KING and ministers, NORTHERN QUEEN and her son, PARPAHEIN.*

NORTHERN QUEEN. Oil of emeralds, lovely chain that is twisted and worked in gold, necklace and locket that I shall always wear entwined around my neck throughout my life, even if I were to live a thousand years! Do you still think of the promise, made by your father to me when you were but a suckling babe, sixteen years ago? He promised that you should be the successor to the throne after him.

PARPAHEIN. Yes, my beloved lady, I always remember and think of it. He made that promise because you were the owner of his gratitude, because you did some act for which he owed you a reward. I want to rule this kingdom, my royal mother, and I think the time is ripe for the promise to be fulfilled. Please go now and ask the king to appoint me as his successor.

NORTHERN QUEEN. One whom I can never love fully to my satisfaction, son of my heart whom I have always nursed and looked after, my only child, in spite of your father's gratitude, I have only my beauty. Birth and honour are lacking; I am only Mistress Beauty. I am afraid that the golden city will not be given to you, the son of

<sup>1</sup>This play has been considered on pp. 65-8.



an unknown, of a nobody. Have you forgotten that there is an elder born, son of the great queen, who dwells in the front wing, adorned with countless towers, of the loved queen, surrounded by golden maidens, with all the glory and honour of the golden lion-king?

PARPAHEIN. Tower of my gratitude, mother to whom I owe a mountain of gratitude higher than Mount Mayyu, I care not for my elder brother, Zayathein. He is nothing, his opinion is nothing. Mother, be not misled by his sweet words, by his grand words. He is a mere nothing. The only thing mighty about him is his conceit, which has been made so by the king putting him before the court, and because of the empty phrases of his courtiers. If my father the king, whose glory enslaves the lowest and the highest in the world, and under whose peace and protection the whole kingdom flourishes, wishes to make me his heir, all is well. If he does not, with a mind cunning and crooked, with a mind sharp-edged, I will plan and I will think. Please go before the king, and learn for certain his decision.

[NORTHERN QUEEN *goes and kneels before the KING.*]

NORTHERN QUEEN. Centre of the universe, to whom the whole world gives homage, master of the whole kingdom, lord who shares with the newly-risen sun the salute of this earth! Your son and mine, the prince, the pearl that this kingdom wears, has attained the age of sixteen years. In full audience was a promise made by you, regarding him; a promise as strong and abiding as the thunder-lightning machine of the sky, as elephant's ivory, as abiding as if it had been nailed to the wall by brass and iron nails. Fulfil that promise, my king, and please grant the kingdom with a joyful heart to my son.

KING. My consort from the northern wing, queen without fault, woman whose body shines with beauty as my glass throne, silvered and diamonded, shines when the throne-room is lighted at night, in spite of my promise to you, your son cannot become king, partly because of his lower birth, mainly because of his drunken ways. Your son has proved himself to be a man of dirt, a man of faults. He cannot rule this kingdom of victories. And there is my right arm, my eldest son, my man who is a master of honour, and a conqueror of glory. By birth and by character, he is entitled to this throne in the near future. In any case, no one can be put above him on the throne now. I will give your son a village, a town, a district. Will that not be enough?

[NORTHERN QUEEN *returns to the PRINCE.*]

NORTHERN QUEEN. Son snow-water, rose-water, necklace of pearls stringed with love! In spite of his sweet words to me, in spite of his promise made in honour, your royal father refuses to give the city and the kingdom to you. He promises to give you a principality, a district to rule. He pretends that he is giving you the honour because of his regard for us, but I know that he does not wish you to be near the throne. He wants to exile you. Use your cunning, use your wisdom, my love. Err not, lose not in your anger. Control yourself, hide your feelings, and take what comes in good part.

PARPAHEIN. Mistress of my birth, keeper of my gratitude! If my father, the god of the kingdom, really means to give the white umbrella and the throne to the eldest prince, he wanders from the path of honour. A king without honour cannot flourish long. The throne itself will be without honour. Then, it will be easier for me to win it; it will be easier for me to use my cunning. The throne will be my right, and history will praise me for winning it.

NORTHERN QUEEN. Lustrous emerald, pearl necklace that I always wear in love, son of my body! Listen, my loved one, follow not your intention, your inclination. People can guess your intentions, your plot will be discovered. Forget your wrongs, and control yourself. Bow to the throne, put yourself in sweetness and pleasantness before them. After all, to be a ruler of a district is a great honour, a piece of great luck. Be content, and go to rule in peace.

PARPAHEIN. Mother with a million hearts for me, let me risk my life. Pity me not, forbid me not. If my luck is good, why should I be content with a little district? If my father breaks his promise, I am absolved from my allegiance to him. I will use my cunning mind, my crooked mind, my wise mind, and I will gather mighty men of valour, and by all possible methods, I will try to win me back my throne. Forgive me, my dearest mother. [Exeunt.]

## SCENE 2

### THE THRONE-ROOM

*Enter four ministers.*

FIRST MINISTER. The king may waver and keep his promise to the northern queen. The kingdom will be ruined if the throne goes to that roof of bad conduct, the man without any knowledge-fruit, that bundle of drink, the doer of lowest deeds, prince without honour. He will ill-treat us, we the four most loyal servants of His

Majesty. He will beat us, he will punish us, he will make us bald by continual torture. No, no, we must not let that prince ascend the throne. We must tell the truth to the king of all glory, the victor that conquers the flower of his enemies.

SECOND MINISTER. We must use our knowledge, our experience. Let us not rest a moment, until the danger has passed. He beats, he tortures. He is a drunken prince, he is brick, he is stone. When he becomes king, if he becomes king, his whims, his desires, how could we satisfy them, how could we please him? He cares only for his strength, he depends only on his right arm. He will execute some, he will torture some, he will beat some, he will slay some, but he will ill-treat all. We must tell our lord the king.

THIRD MINISTER. We must not die too soon. We are not practised long enough in the religion. If we die now, we will be reborn without any hope of escaping from this whirlpool of existence. The prince is certain to end our present existence as soon as he becomes king. . . . We must protect our lives. . . . Ahem, I am afraid we all love this life, in spite of all miseries, as insects love the candle. We give all excuses to live. We appeal to our religion, we appeal to this, we appeal to that. . . . What have you to say, friend over there?

FOURTH MINISTER. Yes. I will appeal to religion, and show you all why we ought not to die. When the prince beats us and tortures us and we die in agony, our minds will be bitter, our thoughts will be away from religion, and we shall fall headlong into hell; or we shall become formless beings, always in agony; in any case, we shall be like buffaloes sunk in mud. . . . Oh, we do not want to die in agony. We do not mind being beaten, being tortured, being made to drink water mixed with horse-dung, but we do mind being put to death. And Parpahein probably, very likely, will at once slay us. We must tell the true state of affairs to our lord the king.

*[Enter KING and herald.]*

FIRST MINISTER. Let me submit this at once, my lord. Your middle son, Parpahein, is not a guardian of the religion, not a keeper of morals: he is a person crooked in his sense of honour. He is a drunkard, and he mixes in bad company. He roams about the country robbing people and ill-treating all. His ways are crooked, his mind is on the wrong path, his words are all untruth. He does not bow to you, he does not enter the throne room to tender homage to you. Think of the future of your kingdom, of your people. We

kneel before you and beg that the throne should never be given to Parpahein.

SECOND MINISTER. Let me submit this, my lord. The young prince Parpahein is always drunk, surrounded by evil persons, roaming the streets, shouting obscene words. He will foul the clear waters of this kingdom. In immorality, in cunning, in crookedness of mind, he bears the greatest fruit, his harvest is the richest. He is of great strength, his followers are mighty. He cares only for brute strength. He cares only for drunken brawls. If you should give the kingdom to that bad prince, the country will be haunted with misery, the kingdom will go dry. . . . I bow low at your feet, and beg to remind you that your eldest son, Zayathein, from whom glory radiates and shines forth, has no faults, and his charm of character disarms even the bitterest enemies of the kingdom.

THIRD MINISTER. Grant me your ear, lord. Your son, Parpahein, is shameless and lawless. He drinks and he gambles. His conduct has holes, his deeds are rough and wild. He abuses his position, and saying that he is a king's son, cares for nobody, cares not even for your authority. He even hopes to rob you of your throne. It is not right, my king, that such a shameless drunkard should reign in your stead.

FOURTH MINISTER. My lord, if he should be king, if this prince with little glory or honour should sit on your throne, outside and inside the capital, there would be riots and discontent, people would be unhappy, and the kingdom will suffer, as the great kingdom of Pagan suffered, through Sukatay seizing the throne of King Kyaungbyu. No, lord, the throne ought not to go to the bad prince. I humbly beg that you give the kingdom to your eldest son, who belongs by right to the front wing, the usual abode of a crown prince. He is the rightful heir, and his ability alone points him out as the rightful successor.

KING. I am afraid what you say is too true. My ministers will never tell untruths to me. The Lord Buddha himself had to obey the unanimous opinion of his clergy, and a king has to do as his ministers wish. I shall have to give the throne at once to Zayathein.

*[Motions to the herald, who leaves and soon returns with ZAYATHEIN.]*

Coign of my heart, fruit of my love, son whom I love to look and love always, heir to the palace, my jewel! Be my successor, receive the throne of our race. Love your people as children of your breast. Be just to them. Lead them to the religion. Mix with the wise,

keep away from the foolish. Take notice of your astrologers, consult your ministers in all things. Control your feelings, and your desires. Keep the Ten Moral Rules of Kings. Destroy all dangers to your kingdom, reward you your soldiers. Promote the able, degrade the defaulter. Raise those who deserve to be raised, lower those who ought to be lowered. Take care that food, water, fire, and air are in plenty in the city. Keep your swords and your spears shining. Build bridges, towers, forts, and walls around your city. Defend your kingdom. Tell not the state secrets even to your chief queen. Let there be peace in your realm. If there is a big disorder, reduce it at once into a small one. If there is a small disorder, reduce it to nothing. . . Farewell, my beloved son, I now leave this world and go into the monastery. Forget not the parting words of your father.

ZAYATHEIN. I take it all into my mind. . . . I will strive to make my kingdom pleasant and peaceful, and I will soon ascend the throne. Farewell, gracious lord, beloved father. [Exeunt.]

## SCENE 3

## A ROOM IN THE PALACE

*Enter* NORTHERN QUEEN.

NORTHERN QUEEN. Because he is the eldest son, Zayathein is now king. He rules this kingdom in glory, and enjoys the peaceful shade of the palace. Though he rules in his father's stead, my son will not bow down to his brother, will not even enter the throne room, where the king is holding his first court. The new king will not forget the old promise, and the fact that Parpahein comes not to kneel before him will make him realize that in Parpahein lies the danger to his throne. The might of my son is not equal to that of the new king, his present ability is nothing compared to that of Zayathein. He can only disturb the kingdom, not win it. And then he will lose his life. It is no good: Parpahein cannot rebel, must not rebel. I must coax my son and make him use sweet words to the king, and forget his plots, abandoning his rebellious ideas.

[*Enter* PARPAHEIN.]

My prince, son that guards my life, man whose pride and valour are shown to the world as a flying flag! Do not be rash, my son, do not follow one side of your mind. Plot not against your brother. Your men are not many, your officers are few. Why not bide your time, and wait at least until your might is equal to the king's?

PARPAHEIN. Mount Mayyu of my gratitude, mother with limitless honour! It is useless to win me over, it is impossible to conquer me through my ears. My father has given the throne to him, and I do not wish to stay on in the palace under Zayathein, serving him, inferior to him, looking like a man with a broken skin, powerless, gloryless, honourless. Mother, I will take my chance. I either miss or win. I will attack amidst bullets. If I am hit, it is the end. If I am not hit, I reach my objective. I have no one to consider, I am alone in the world except for you. If you forgive me, all is well. If I am killed, mourn me not. I am a son of my luck. What it wills, I shall get. It will strive and plot. Fear not for me, loved mother without any equal. [Exeunt.]

## SCENE 4

## THE THRONE-ROOM

*Enter ZAYATHEIN, now KING, ministers, etc.*

KING. I have been crowned king, and I now rule in glory the kingdom of victories. I rule in my father's place, but Parpahein has not come before me, he has not come in to show his allegiance. Ministers, send Parpahein my orders that he should come to this room, while I hold audience. He must come at once, in the full robes of a prince.

[Enter PARPAHEIN with some followers. They stand in an extreme corner of the stage. They are supposed to be outside the throne room, but near its entrance.]

PARPAHEIN. My followers who are crooked to the extreme, spearheads of roughness and boldness, men without religion, a logs of lawlessness! My mother and I are alone in this world. My father cared not for us, broke his promise to us, and left us unprotected against the world. If no one loves us, why should we love any one? . . . I shall show my brother what I can do. I shall be as irresponsible as a schoolboy, I shall be as high as the sky. . . . I will be a dirty man, a drunken man. The king will send me messengers. He will send one, then two, then three, then more, summoning me to his presence. Beat them, cane them, ill-treat all the messengers. Do anything to them, but let them not die. . . . Ha, ha, I will show what I can do. (*He sings boisterously*) 'This little prince is in a faint. He will fall, he will die. He must have air, the

air that comes through the white diamonded window of the throne-room.' 'This is a lovely new perfume. It is inside an emerald case. It is imprisoned in a little glass case, but its sweet smell will be all over the city. It has the colour of amber. Yes, yes, the perfume is going to be popular in the palace.' 'Who will help me? I am an exile, but I shall burn this city. Oh, beat you the drum, and catch you this flame.'

*[Exeunt PARPAHEIN and followers. A courtier leaves the throne-room, and comes back a few moments later. He says that on his giving the summons from the KING, PARPAHEIN beat him.]*

KING. Yes, he is in anger, because Father gave him not the throne. He is a fool, a drunkard, and a danger to the country. I have known it long, but I have always shielded him from punishment and disgrace, because that will break his mother's heart. I have given him a chance to come and tender homage to me, and let me forgive the past. . . . I will give him yet another chance. I do not wish to punish him. He is my brother, he is the son of my father; after all, he is only a child-brother of mine. And there is his mother. She saved my father's life, at least she stopped his pain, while he lay in agony with a poisoned wound. With her lips, with her own dainty lips, she sucked out the poison from the wound. Also, when my mother was ill, she nursed my younger brother as if he were her own child. I must learn to forgive, as a king always must. . . . My learned ministers, whose knowledge of east and west, front and back, and whose vast experience make you the glory and pleasure of my kingdom, my brother Parpahein, he is but a little child, spoiled by too much love, but harmless. He is drunk, and I must not take offence at his treatment of my messenger. He is only a little child, testing his elder brother's love. We will soon send another messenger.

*[Enter PARPAHEIN as before.]*

PARPAHEIN. Men ruined by lawlessness and foolishness, men of my heart, men of my mind, who have always stood by me and fulfilled my desires! My father that gave me life broke his promise. I was to flourish on the throne. But the royal mouth kept not to its words. Until I rule on my rightful throne, I will not rest. The man who caused the promise to be broken, the eldest prince who gained the throne, the new king, is certain to send further messages, ordering me

to come before him in audience. Ahem, break every bone in the body of any messenger that comes to me from the throne-room. Fear not, my men.

[*Exeunt. The KING and ministers have been talking when PARPAHEIN spoke. Now they send two ministers to summon PARPAHEIN. They come back hurt and in pain.*]

MINISTER. My lord, we took with us some followers, and summoned the prince to appear before you. But he and his drunker mob attacked and overpowered us. He slew some, put some between the 'bamboos',<sup>1</sup> broke the bones of many, and belaboured us all. Now he is reeling with drink like a merry-go-round, and is out in the streets, followed by his drunken slaves.

KING. My brother cares not, loves not his elder brother, successor to his father on the throne. He is as King Zayathat.<sup>2</sup> His pride flies forth and will not bow to me. Not content with drinking and gambling, he now slays the king's messengers. I must punish this brother of mine, whose character is crooked, and who is an enemy to the throne. Strip him of his carriages, houses, fields, attendants, villages, horses, elephants, swords, spears, weapons, gold umbrellas, dresses, uniform, and all other property he possesses. Make him a common attendant in the elephant-stables. Let him be guarded, and let poverty and hardship tame his pride.

[*Some ministers go out. They return with PARPAHEIN, held roughly by soldiers.*]

PARPAHEIN. Aha, aha! What did you say to me, my good fellows? Am I drunk? Of course I am. It is my very great luck, my merit in my previous lives, that gives me drink. Even if drink is bad for me, it is my own look-out. I am a man, and I can do, I will do, as I wish. I feel a prince only when I am drunk. If I am drunk, and if I misbehave, you can turn your eyes away. . . . Aha, although my luck is thin at the moment, my wit is deep. I care not for anything, anybody. I think and plot. If I dive, I dive until I hold the sand at the bottom of the sea. I am a prince of valour. What care I for you?

[*Exeunt.*]

<sup>1</sup> An instrument of torture to make criminals confess their deeds.

<sup>2</sup> A king in India who killed his father and seized the throne, during the lifetime of the Buddha.



## SCENE 5

## THE THRONE-ROOM

*Enter KING and minister, and converse. Enter in haste the youngest prince, ATHUMBAIN.*

KING. Brother of the palace-line, youth that I love, younger brother who guesses the desires of his elder! You are sad, you are crying. Why do you hasten in here with a fading face? Do you miss our father? Did you enter this room forgetting that your beloved is no longer here? Are you disappointed to find only me? Tell me, little brother, tell me all your troubles.

ATHUMBAIN. My lord, as it is the duty of parents to punish wayward children, you, who are our father now, have sent our middle brother to the elephant-stables to stop him from drinking and gambling. He is now really frightened, brother, his tusk is broken, his face is faded and soiled. . . . I feel sorry for him, lord, and please forgive him this once. He has been tamed. Please release him now.

KING. Brother whose presence in the palace, in the rooms, among the towers, adorn them all, whose presence in the chambers makes the emerald palace shine with my people's love for him, brother tied to me with the string of love! No, no, I cannot release him. I did not want to punish him. But he was as the raven that comes again after being soundly beaten with sticks, he was the crooked tail of a dog, that can never be made straight. Beloved brother, ask me not his pardon. He will try to plot against this throne, against my life even. I must not neglect the fire that threatens to burn too brightly, I must put it out at once. Ask me not his pardon, brother.

ATHUMBAIN. My royal brother, my elder of glory, my king whose glory puts to shame the brightness of the world's sun! Treat not Parpahein as a stranger. We three belong to the same Sun-race, we have the same kind of intestines. Extinguish the royal punishment, forget your anger. I am his favourite brother, I will beg him, coax him. I can make him abstain from bad deeds. If he should err again, then you can punish him. But please free him now, brother, and believe me, I will make him behave. He loves me, and will do as I beg him to do. I promise that he shall never drink or gamble again. And, beloved brother, there is his mother, my darling, my second mother. She is all sorrow, her face is clouded. Will you not consider her, brother of my heart?

KING. Friend of the Sun, brother tied to me with strong ropes of golden love, youth as graceful as a dragon-snake, third in the royal line! In the country of the blind, the one-eyed man is king. Parpahein is the one-eyed man among foolish drunkards. Because he leads a crowd of half-wits, he thinks he can stand against the king himself. He is still wisdomless, he is still untamed. Unless I destroy his foolish pride once and for all, he will be a danger to the peace of the kingdom. Ask me not to pardon him. He has to suffer only for his crime. He must remain in the stables for full three years, until his fiery temper is tamed and killed. *[Exeunt.]*

## SCENE 6

## OUTSIDE THE STABLES

*Enter PARPAHEIN.*

PARPAHEIN. Ahem, friend Zayathein has taken away all my rank, all my property, and all my followers. He has put me as an attendant in the elephant-stables. Yes, yes, everyone has his turn. If I wait and if I plot, my turn too will come. There is always something for somebody. Everyone seems to manage to live somehow. Look at the headless crab, he seems to enjoy life very well. I am the son of a king, I was born in the palace. I have hands, feet, head. Why should I not reach my goal? I was hatched among the towers of a golden palace, I am a seedling from the royal line. What do I care? With a little luck, I shall have three kings in my hand, and who can have better cards than those? I will never die until I have killed my royal brother. I must think out the various advantages my brother has over me in our fight for the throne. Yes, he has the magic sword that the king of the gods gave to our ancestor, and which my royal father gave him with my throne. He has also the magic spear. I have no weapons. No followers, either. The only thing I can do is to get the spear and the sword. Yes, I will disguise myself, and leave this place as if I were an ordinary attendant. I will then climb the walls of the palace and steal the magic weapons. Afterwards I will jump on my beloved brother, I will tread on him, and I will kill him.

*[Exit.]*

## SCENE 7

## OUTSIDE THE PALACE-WALLS

*Enter KING on one side.*

KING. Because I am the eldest son, I have ascended the throne of my father. I am determined to follow the tradition of my dynasty, and I will rule this kingdom with honour, flying the banner of justice and law. However, I do not know what the men and women of my city think. Do they praise me loudly? Or do they whisper my failings? Many events have happened since I was crowned king only this morning. I must know the opinion of my people. Therefore, I have come out of the palace, disguised as a poor labourer, so that I may wander in my city and listen to my people's gossip.

*[Enter PARPAHEIN on the other side.]*

PARPAHEIN. When I come to think of it, he is the ruler of this mighty realm. Still, my turn will come, and I shall be able to stand against his might. . . . Well, I suppose I must dare. I am alone, I am only a young prince. So what does it matter if I die? And if I live! I will be as sharp as a thorn, my glory will be as pointed as a spear. . . . I have been tattooed with magic charms; I now repeat the magic words to myself. *[A pause.]* Now I will jump and climb this wall. Steady on, my prince!

KING. Ah, as I walk disguised as a poor man, I see before me a nightman, a suspicious-looking person. He watches the palace-walls, and the palace drum has just struck the hour of midnight. He cannot be a very pure and law-abiding person. I will pretend that I do not see him. Hush! I will glance slyly and watch his movements.

PARPAHEIN. The time has come, the drum has struck the hour. I must scale the walls quickly and steal the magic weapons. This reminds me of the famous robber hero Ngatetpya, who raided even the palace in the kingdom of Sagaing.<sup>1</sup> I will dare as he dared. I am

<sup>1</sup> Sagaing, one of the many little kingdoms that came into being after the fall of Pagan, flourished from 1315 to 1364. Ngatetpya was a great philanthropist and built many monasteries and pagodas, which he always announced to have been 'built by public charity'. At night, disguised, he raided the houses of the wealthy, including the palace itself. He was not even suspected for the robberies until one night he met the king disguised as a robber. Ngatetpya asked the king to be his lieutenant, and together they raided many houses. They parted before dawn, but the king had by then recognized Ngatetpya. He was brought to trial the next day. The people, learning that the daring robberies were the work of one man, single-handed and unaided until he

a man, I am a prince of valour. I must not be afraid. Come on, lad, care not for guns and swords and spears. Jump over the wall, risk your life. Do and dare. Steel yourself. My lord of the orchestra, play me a short encouragement to climb the wall.

[*The orchestra plays and stops.*]

KING. That man has some valour and some strength. He is trying to scale the wall. He is a nightman, a robber, a thief. If he is brave, I will be brave too. I will capture him single-handed, without using any weapon. As wax is subdued by fire, our friend of the night will be subdued by his king. My lord of the orchestra, make ready to help me, the king.

[*The orchestra plays and stops.*]

PARPAHEIN. Come on, friend, scale this fort. Jump on to the wall. Though it is high and well-guarded with spikes and all, I have the ability to negotiate it. I have a magic needle in my arm, I have on me the neck of a wild bird, the hair of a cockroach, the wing of a peacock, the intestines of a cat, the right arm of an alchemist who died in his laboratory just as he was going to become a *zawgyee*, a multi-coloured pumpkin. I have on my body tattooed pictures of a monkey, a lizard, and an ogre. They will help me to conquer this mighty wall.<sup>1</sup> O master of the orchestra, make ready to help me to win.

[*The orchestra plays and stops.*]

KING. That person probably possesses some charm to be able to climb the wall. Well, the might of a king's body can match any charm. I will conquer him without any weapon, with my right arm only. My lord of the orchestra, help me to follow him.

met the king, proclaimed him hero; it came out at the trial that all the proceeds of the raids were spent wholly on the poor and in building pagodas; he and the king had learnt to admire each other, as during the raids they risked their lives together many a time; his cynical sense of humour, his respectful but fearless demeanour at the trial—all these factors combined together to win him his pardon. He later became a minister and led many warlike expeditions, and was much loved and respected.

The reference results in dramatic irony, for Parpahein does not realize that he is more like Ngatetpya than he imagines as he also is going to meet the king in disguise.

<sup>1</sup> All charms supposed to give their possessor great physical strength, and make him immune from injury.

*[The orchestra plays, and the KING chases PARPAHEIN and catches him. Of course, they are supposed to be jumping on and off the wall. PARPAHEIN jumps on to the wall, the KING follows suit. PARPAHEIN jumps down again to escape pursuit, and the KING does likewise.]*

KING. Aha, my luck is good. I came out to hear idle gossip, and instead I catch Parpahein, armed with a dagger, scaling the wall. Your behaviour condemns you, Parpahein. You came here to kill your king.

*[Enter ministers and soldiers running. They recognize the KING and kneel down. Some surround the struggling PARPAHEIN.]*

Take this rebel, my lords. Tie him with ropes, and execute him when morning dawns.

*[He walks towards the other side of the stage, followed by two soldiers. The rest surround PARPAHEIN, and prepare to tie him as a common criminal.]*

PARPAHEIN. What ails you, friends? Why do you surround me in haste? Tell me why have you entered my royal presence.

FIRST MINISTER. Your brother the king orders that you be imprisoned for the night, as you heard. Though you are the king's brother, we servants of royal justice cannot consider your feelings. We must bind you as common criminals are bound. My lord, resist not, but yield to greater forces. Look at the spears flashing, look at the swords shining over your head. Restrain yourself, my lord, and let the soldiers bind you.

PARPAHEIN. Ill-treat me not, although you have the king's orders. Bind me not. I am a prince born. A king's son should never be bound with ropes as a common criminal. I am not afraid to die, to undergo torture. I will not resist. I will come with you quietly to the prison. But bind me not. Let me not go down in history as a common criminal, let it not be said in history that you treated me as a common criminal. Whatever I have done, I still remain a king's son. Bind me not. Lead on, show me the way, I will come quietly.

SECOND MINISTER. Ah, Mister Criminal, Brother Felon. You cannot argue, my lord. You are a danger to our country, you are a rebel. You are the fire that threatens to burn our kingdom.

*[They tie him with ropes. Enter the youngest prince, ATHUMBAIN. On learning the facts, he runs and kneels before PARPAHEIN.]*

ATHUMBAIN. Brother, you have rushed rashly into the net, as birds and wild fowls go to their deaths. There is no denying it, you are completely caught. In this state of affairs, do not make people hate you by being stern with them all. Do not be hard, do not be harsh, brother mine. Use sweet words and control your pride. Bow down low, and escape from death, my dear lord.

PARPAHEIN. My dear, pretty brother. In this life everything ends, and why should I be afraid to meet the natural end? I will never bow down and kneel for my brother's protection. What do I care? I shall be put to death. But even my bones shall shout defiance to all.

ATHUMBAIN. Blame it on drink, and ask for pardon. Say drink made you mad. Put our brother's feet on your brow, kneel down, raise up your hands in prayer, beg for pardon. He is your brother after all, and he will pardon you and save you from your death.

*[He runs to the KING and kneels.]*

Brother glory, the roof of all kings, owner of the white umbrella that is perched proudly on the golden tower! While the whole city sleeps, Brother Middle scales the wall. He is caught. He is a robber, he is a thief, he is a rebel. He must be punished. By law, he can be put to death. But provided a criminal is adequately punished, provided there is no further danger from him, there is no need to kill him outright. Parpahein is subdued. If you save him from death, the country will praise you. Let him be beaten and caned at the cross-roads, if you wish, but kill not your own brother, my dear lord.

KING. Brother who equals the most precious pearl in beauty, my beloved Athumbain! Parpahein had only the worst of intentions towards me, otherwise he would not have tried to climb over my palace-wall at dead of night. He had only crooked thoughts, unstraight mind, unsmooth ideas. I must not under-estimate my enemy, I must not think that the fire-mountain of danger is only an insect of annoyance. Even if the fire should consist only of dying sparks, I cannot neglect it, as otherwise with wind and time, it may burn down my throne. Brother, the fire must be put out before it burns anything. I must kill the rebel at once.

ATHUMBAIN. Let me submit this, my brother. It is true that his offence deserves death. He erred in his path, he wandered from his allegiance. He plotted against his king. But the fire that dares to burn is only a little fire, and a handful of sand will put it out.

Why use water and men and soldiers, when a handful of earth will extinguish the fire? Why use the terrible weapon of death when a lesser punishment will do instead? Moreover, he is one of us, our intestines are of the same king, our blood flowed into us from the same stream. His father is ours. If you wish not to consider him, consider his sorrowing mother. If you wish not to consider her, please consider the wishes of this little brother, who was in your mother's womb, whose heart has the same golden blood as yours. Please consider and be kind to this shadowed-face, stricken with misery.

KING. Beloved brother, worthy in every way to be a scion of our house, though he did compass my death, though his guilt is glaring, for yours reasons, I will release him, and pardon him. Your sweet and gentle words win me over. Gods and men will praise you for your deed. My people who love you so well will blame me if I were to refuse your prayer . . . I pardon Parpahein and order that he be released at once. But he is exiled. He must leave the city at the moment of his release for the frontier. Take this sealed order and proclaim his release, my little brother.

*[Exit, followed by some soldiers. ATHUMBAIN goes to the other group and proclaims the KING's orders. PARPAHEIN is released. Exeunt others.]*

PARPAHEIN. Now is the time, I will attack and conquer this kingdom as suddenly and successfully as the horse descends on the line and checkmates the king in chess.<sup>1</sup> I am a prince born in the northern wing. But my plots almost reach the sky. I am the son-in-law of success. Oh, yes, I will leave this city, but not into exile. I will come back soon to destroy the towers and castles of the king. I now go with a crooked mind, a mind full of ideas, a mind bent and strained with thought. My lord of the orchestra, please lead me on my way.

*[The orchestra plays the 'forest tune', which lasts for some minutes, while PARPAHEIN walks up and down. When it stops, he has arrived at a village in the forest. Enter the headman of the village with some villagers.]*

HEADMAN. Man well-known for ability and glory, prince of the

<sup>1</sup> Burmese chess differs from that of European and other nations in detail, but the principles are the same. The horse is exactly similar in movement and importance to the knight of European chess.

golden palace, how come you here at dawn, without horse or carriage or followers? It seems very strange to us. Please enlighten us in your golden voice.

PARPAHEIN. Officer who administers faithfully and ably the district of Pyiso-mraydaing, famous headman of this village! The reason why I have come to this distant frontier is because I want to win the throne, which was promised me by my royal father. He broke his promise, and gave the throne to his beloved eldest son, before he retired to the monastery. I will fight this injustice, and will put me on my rightful throne. My schemes are all worked out, my plots are all ready. But I need gallant and faithful followers. Will you and your villagers help me to my throne? Think it over. If I succeed, there will be ample reward.

HEADMAN. Let me submit this, my prince. Worry not, sorrow not, for your throne. There is no need to get thin, to put a sorrowful look on your face, through disappointment. We will win you back your crown. Appoint us your officers, and we will soon march on the capital. Please do not weary your mind with anxiety for your throne. Your attack against your enemy-brother Zayathein must be successful, for these followers of yours, my prince, will be sharp, will be thick-skinned, will be rough and daring. We will soon form ourselves into a victorious army. Death fighting for you is nothing to us, my gallant lord.

[*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE 8

### THE FOREST

*Enter ATHUMBAIN with some followers. They are journeying to an adjoining kingdom to bring back its princess to be married to the KING. ATHUMBAIN is the royal ambassador. They decide to pitch their camp for the night. They sleep. In outline only. A pause.*

(*Heard off*). We are not afraid, for we are men of valour. With gongs beating, drums sounding, flags flying, we soldiers of Parpahein march swiftly in the dark. The night is cool, the sky has turned deep-brown with darkness, the mist in fear runs away from us, the buds on the trees wave to us in greeting. The time has come, the drum has struck. We, the trusted soldiers of Parpahein, will march on to victory. We are glad to conquer, we are as swift as a flying bird, we are the kinsmen of the Thuya soldier-gods. O fairies of the forest, protect us on our march and in battle. Our swords are



unsheathed, our spears are shining, our flags are many. We will drink ourselves to madness when we win the city. We will destroy Zayathein, and he shall become the powerless brother. Come on lads, to diamonds, to gold, and to victory!

[PARPAHEIN enters with his army. He seizes ATHUMBAIN and followers. He says that ATHUMBAIN is guilty of a heinous crime. When they were young, ATHUMBAIN shared with him his mother's milk, and therefore committed a robbery. PARPAHEIN is still suffering from the effects of the wrong; he is thin and weak because he was under-nourished as a child. Found guilty of this mockery of an accusation ATHUMBAIN is executed, and his attendants forced to join the rebel army. Exeunt PARPAHEIN and followers leaving the dead body of ATHUMBAIN. In outline.]

## SCENE 9

## THE THRONE-ROOM

*Shouts and sounds of fighting are heard. Enter KING with his magic sword and spear. A minister rushes in and reports that PARPAHEIN and his rebels have seized the palace itself, attacking with suddenness in the dark. He begs the KING to fly as resistance will be of no avail, pointing out that if he escapes, he can rally his supporters around him and win back the throne from PARPAHEIN. Sounds of soldiers shouting death to the KING are heard. The KING jumps away from the stage as some rebel soldiers enter. They soon leave, shouting. In outline only.*

## SCENE 10

## THE FOREST

ATHUMBAIN lying dead. Enter the KING. He sees the body, takes it in his arms, and weeps.

KING. Brother Athumbain who was tied to me strongly with the golden thread of love, brother whose bone was connected with my bone! I am burning as if the shining midday sun were inside my breast, drying up my heart. Tears come down as pearl necklaces. I cannot restrain myself. I have to cry, although I am a king, for my love cannot hide my grief. . . But I must not cry as much as I want to, for the whole world, this very earth itself, will then become haunted with grief to hear my sorrow. . . . My sorrow and my longing for you,

my Athumbain, break my heart. . . . When Prince Rama and his brother lost the Princess Sita, they ran here and there with grief. But their sorrow was nothing compared to mine. . . . Yes, we all have to suffer, we all have to die. Until we reach Nirvana, we shall go through again and again this torture of grief, this torture of having to lose always the ones we love. But this knowledge does not stay my tears. I am king, I am lord, I am above my wisest ministers. I am wise, I know my religion, I have studied, and I have learned wisdom. But when it comes to grief, my experience and my learning cannot help me drowning in the ocean of my sorrow. . . . Athumbain, Athumbain, where are you, my brother? Yes, you and I, brother, are now burnt out and destroyed, as if ten suns had burnt us. For what sin in previous lives do we perish thus? Athumbain, my brother, in this forest glade, adorned with handsome-stemmed trees, perfumed with jasmine-smells, we play our drama of tears.

[*Enter away from the brothers, a ZAWGYEE.*]

ZAWGYEE. At last, I have achieved what I desired, I have obtained the philosopher's stone, and I have also become a *zawgyee*. My stone can turn lead into silver, brass into gold. I have eaten that compound of alchemy, which makes me above nature, above this earthliness. I cannot be hit by bullets and bombs, and swords and spears wound me not at all . . . I can be king. But what care I for worldly power? Make way, make way, I wish to leave the abode of human beings and retire to the forest. My lord of the orchestra, please show me the beauties of the forest.

[*He walks up and down as the orchestra plays. It stops.*]

I have reached a lovely part of the forest . . . Look at the flower-towers, look at the waterfall. Here is a streamlet, there is a little pond. Here are pebbles and silvery sand. Green moss covers that rock, green water flows silently down that stone. The heat of the midday sun has no effect on the coolness of this peaceful place. Short trees and tall trees, big trees and small trees, they stand side by side and greet the wanderer in the forest . . . That fern clings to its lover, that tree is defiant. This bush looks inviting, that bamboo looks charming. That place under that tree is smooth-lawned. Did some fairy play there before I came and frightened it away? . . . What a lovely place! A poet can live here for ever to write his verses on this beauty.

[*He walks on and meets the two brothers. He recognizes the*

KING. *He soothes the KING, and touches the dead ATHUMBAIN with his wand, and restores him to life. . . . The brothers are overjoyed. . . . The ZAWGYEE offers to win back the throne for them. But they are tired of life and its sorrows. They decide to go to a thicker part of the forest, and live as hermits. They bid farewell to the ZAWGYEE. Exit the ZAWGYEE on one side, exeunt the brothers on the other, as the orchestra starts to play.]*

## APPENDIX V

### PADUMA<sup>1</sup>

BY U PON NYA

#### SCENE 1

##### THE THRONE-ROOM

*Enter KING and ministers. He summons his seven sons to appear before him. They enter.*

KING. My beloved sons, my golden princes, my men of destiny, your arms and horses and men are so many that there may be trouble in the near future. Arrogant youth, blind youth, greedy youth may urge you to plunging the country into ruin. We kings are taught: 'If the beak is long, cut the beak; if the wing is long, cut the wing.' Therefore I order that my beloved sons should leave the city, and take for their palace the forest on the silver-misted mountains, until your father grows tired of this world and enters the abode of the gods, on pleasure bent. When your father has thus departed this life for the six-storeyed paradise, you will come back to rule the country, surrounded by mighty men of valour.

PADUMA (*the eldest prince, aside to his brothers*). My golden brothers, you hear the orders of our lord the king. Being the owner of power and wealth, he is anxious and therefore heartless, and he thinks that our retainers are too many. We must be careful in our reply. Do you wish to say anything in particular?

SECOND BROTHER. Dear lord, hero of our dreams, our beloved father acts as if he were a stranger to us. There is no remedy against his cruel decision, for he is the master of this country's power, except to conquer his wrath by submission and humble appeal. Beloved brother, please appeal for us.

PADUMA. Descendant of the Sun, Master of the Continent, our beloved father! You have ordered us to go away to dwell in the far-off forest, thinking only of future rebellions and distress that may

<sup>1</sup> This play has been considered on pp. 78-81.

be occasioned by our men and gold and jewels. Need we leave our beloved palace where we were born and taught to play? Do you not pity your own sons that now kneel in submission and in love? Strip us of power and wealth, of gold and men and elephants. We will drink yet again the water of allegiance, and serve you with ever-willing hearts as humble commoners.

KING. The blood of your father's heart, my seven princes, I am the fountain of justice in the kingdom, and I have to act according to kingly duty. My love is knit to your bodies, but my duty to the kingdom demands that I must extinguish the fire that threatens to burn too brightly. Prince Rama, his beloved, and his brother were exiled from their kingdom, so that there should be no riots and disorder in their father's country. Necessity demands that my orders should be absolute and there should be no further argument. Hasten to the forest, blame hard Fate alone. Your father's heart follows you into exile.<sup>1</sup>

[*Exeunt.*]

## SCENE 2

### THE FOREST

*Enter the seven brothers.*

PADUMA. We have arrived at the cloud-darkened, misty-brown hills. We have lost our bearings and we do not know which is east or south or north. Our emerald consorts are so fatigued that they refuse to walk any further. We can find no fruit or meat to appease their hunger. Let us hold a council of war.

SECOND BROTHER. Brother with the grace of a god, brother beloved of other brothers, brother meant to rule the world! We seven, for the sake of our country, should take care that at least one of us should live, in order that there should be a king for our people. The duty we owe to our people demands that we should preserve our lives as long as possible. When there is a necessity, even a mother must sacrifice her son. We must kill our wives in turn and divide equally their flesh for our food. I know we shall have to suffer for this sin in our next existence, but let us leave the future to take care of itself. At least we ought to postpone our deaths, even though King Death is certain to conquer us in the end.

THIRD BROTHER. Listen, my lord. Man cannot resist three desires, the desire for food, that for drink, and that for woman. Other desires

<sup>1</sup> Presumably, the exile of the princes is demanded by the ministers.

he can resist, for there can be substitutes. Of the three, the desires for food and drink are more pressing than that for woman, their intensity is ten times more. Even though death is certain, we should postpone it as long as possible, as we cannot guess what help Fate may bring.

FOURTH BROTHER. Let me submit this, my lord. On the red-hot sands of a desert, a mother walks, with her only child, a suckling babe, in her arms, and a basket on her head. The heat increases. With a half-heart, almost broken with pain, she takes off her dress and by putting it on her burning feet, she tries to fight the heat of the sands. The heat increases. She puts down the basket, and stands on it for a while. The heat does not diminish. She can stand it no more. With a breaking heart, with little pearly tears in her eyes, she takes her beloved jewel, her child, and stands on it, to save herself from the intense burning-pain, if only for a few moments. From this, my lord, let us take a moral. One cannot love others better than oneself. I second my brother's proposal to kill our wives. Follow our plan, my jewel brother.

FIFTH BROTHER. My lord, it is the habit of man to protect his wife at the cost of his wealth. But he protects his life at the cost of his wife. If a prince's life is saved, and he lives on, wife and jewels he can always get. The situation is ugly, and we must preserve our strength at the cost of our wives.

SIXTH BROTHER. My lord it is written in a famous book, that human nature makes a man forget the affairs of others when his dear life is in danger. In another, it is written that let alone a prince, a beggar, because of his manhood, is better than the best born of females. We are men, we belong to that sex that gives Buddhas to the world, for a Buddha is always a male. We are princes, whom Fate has singled out for great deeds and campaigns bold. Shall we lose our lives, just because we are scrupulous about our females? Should we starve, while living food walks beside us? A day of life is worth everything. Hurry, oh hurry, my lord, and let us relieve our suffering.

SEVENTH BROTHER. When the great sages of the past gave names<sup>1</sup> to various things, they named the wife 'not to itch', for the simple reason that the purpose of a man taking his wife is to make her scratch his back. There is no greater itch than the itching of the

<sup>1</sup> This passage is a pun on the Burmese word, *maya* which, taken as one word, means *wife*, but which as two means 'not to itch'.

intestines for want of food. Let us scratch our itching with the help of our wives, though in a slightly different way than that in use in the time of the great sages!

PADUMA. O flowers that are bound to me with the string of brotherly love, O brothers, your unanimous opinion gives me great sorrow, and a fear of impending disaster. Your plan appears to you logical and suitable. But do not forget ancient fables and stories. Nine million swans were once destroyed, because they learned to eat the flesh of their fellows, and King Bawrithat was expelled from his kingdom for eating human flesh. I cannot decide. I know it is against all human principles to kill and eat our princesses. The sight of your tortured faces makes me wish, however, that I could agree to your plan. We can blame but hard Fate, and pray and wish for swift and sudden death.

### SCENE 3

#### ANOTHER PART OF THE FOREST

*Enter PADUMA and his PRINCESS.*

PADUMA. Small of waist and lovely of breast, the pride of the palace, the rarest flower that I will always wear until death! Our brothers have eaten up, in the madness of starvation, my royal sisters that had laughed so often in the shadow of our palace. The brothers, too, will die soon, for they will eat each other. We have walked and run for miles. But we must go on, and along the rough paths of the forest, can the palace-born princess walk?

PRINCESS. The jewel of the whole world, the never-fading flower of your consort, man worth a kingdom! I feel my strength ebbing away, and I feel that my misery is going to end here. My golden jewel, say farewell to me. Love, we now part for ever. Please leave the lifeless body of your princess in the forest glade, and fly for your life, my dear lord.

PADUMA. My playmate of the palace, have you ever heard of such a thing as this? How can you die when I am with you? Do we not live together? Then, shall we not die together? Talk not of death, my love. I will carry you on my back, and take you out of this directionless, pathless, dark-brown forest, and the sun-baked silvery sands.

PRINCESS. My lord of pure gold that I gaze at for ever in ecstasy! In this forest-desert, we shall never find well or pond or lake. It is

midsummer and midday, and the heat and fatigue are bursting every blood-stream of my poor chest . . . Oh, for some water! My lord, is not this life one long misery? Why can I not die, when I wish to die from this pain? Do you love me, lord? Then, kill me now and save both yourself and me. My golden lord, spare not this misery, this suffering that is me . . . Oh, oh, fires burn in my breast, and my bodice is torn with the heaving of my chest. Love, do not look at me, you might pity me too much. Kill me swiftly, lord, and relieve me of my pain.

PADUMA. Friend of my heart who is lovely and soft in body and in heart as honey-wax or lily! How can you die of such a little thing as thirst, as long as your big brother is still alive? Be not like the elephant that gives up going through a gap, when only the tail is left on the other side. We have walked through undergrowth and shrub and rough, rocky ground. We see only pearl and silver sand before us, and can we not walk easily now? Take heart, faint heart, my love. Here is cool water. (PADUMA makes a cut on his leg with his sword, and the PRINCESS sucks the blood.) Aha, you look refreshed, my little girl. Steel your heart, and walk but a few steps more, and we shall soon be out of this forest, and find a suitable place to settle on.

*[The orchestra plays while the two walk, to denote that the scene is changing, and when the orchestra stops they have arrived at the edge of the forest, by the side of a river.*

*On a raft, a mutilated and bleeding man, with his limbs missing, enters.]*

THE MAN. In the snare of life, I am caught in misery. Pursued by bad luck, tempted by bad gods, I again and again took the property of others, using all my wits. I was caught red-handed, and they have cut off my hands and feet, my nose and my ears, and sent me adrift on a makeshift raft, so that I should drown in agony . . . I do not know where this will end, where the raft will stop. The only thing that can end this miserable wretch is death. . . . Help! Help!

PADUMA. Flower made of golden wax, jasmine that is united to me by deeds of merit I did in a previous existence, the orchid-bud that is strung with my love! Amidst the din made by the waves, the whirlpools and the rapids of the swiftly flowing river, over the noisy sands, I hear the louder cry of a man in pain. Look, look! What can it be that floats on the river? Who can it be that cries in pain?

PRINCESS. Husband endowed with all the virtues, husband that is



always pure, the sun-descendant that shines for ever on my brow! The unfortunate wretch that has been sent adrift on a makeshift bamboo-raft by cruel men, will soon die among the waves, if none saves him. Poor wretch, it would have been much kinder had he been ordered to be killed at sight. Pity his fate, my lord.

PADUMA. Kindly princess, I think he has been punished by royal justice. The raft is sinking, and the fellow will soon drown. Let me save him, beloved, from certain death, and restore him to life, and I shall thereby gain exceptional merit. (*Aside to the orchestra.*) I that pray to be a Buddha one day will now swim, and sacrifice my life even to save this fellow-human. My lord of the drums and flutes, use your nimble fingers, and play me a tune to show the way.

[*The orchestra plays while PADUMA moves his hands, as if he were swimming; he reaches the raft, and carries the man in his arms to the PRINCESS. The orchestra stops.*]

PADUMA. My consort, from whose body shine rays of beauty and virtue, come and please look! Here is a frightful being, with his limbs, nose, and ears cut off. He is alive, but that is all; he is just alive but will always be in pain. I presume he is a criminal punished by royal justice.

THE MAN. Let me submit this, my lord. I fell into bad company, and did many misdeeds, and stole other people's property. I was brought to justice, and sent adrift down the stream to die in shame and agony. Swift and sudden death was certain, half of me was in the hands of King Death, and my step was on the border of Hell, when my lord, pure and virtuous, one who will be a Buddha in the future, saved me. My old life is ended, my lord, and I have only you to thank, only you to love and worship, in my new life.

PADUMA. Victim of bad fortune, O limbless man! In this country of human beings, this world, nothing lasts for ever; all that has a beginning will have an end one day; so it is useless to long for anything, for that thing will not last, and that thing is not real. You did not realize that, and you wanted worldly, useless things. Your greed had cost you dear. Angry justice had punished you, and you are half-dead, my man of misery. . . . From this, let us take a lesson. Let us take refuge in religion, and lead a life of purity, without sin. . . . Poor miserable man, death would have been better than this pain. (*To PRINCESS*) The limit of gracefulness, princess weighed down with the weight of beauty, woman that needs no adornment,

beauty that increases by being looked at! We are all alike. We have to suffer pain and misery, although we belong to the Sun-race. We have to suffer, just the same as other human beings. We reap as we sow. . . . We have no food or shelter now, but we have to be content and wait for better fortune.

PRINCESS. My lord, is not Fate hard on us? We are all by ourselves in the forest, and there is none to cheer or help us. Look at yourself, look at me. We are tired and worn out and dirty. Look at our clothes. They are soiled and torn. Look at your head-dress, look at my breast-cloth. Your playmate of the palace is dizzy and dirty. She no longer looks like a human being. Our stars are ugly, the death-gate opens wide for us. I hate our royal father, I hate him. Oh, I loathe him. I cannot restrain myself, lord, I want to cry and cry.

PADUMA. My only friend in the world, my beauty that no sculptor can copy, my love from whom comes the scent of the sweetest-smelling flowers. Do not lose heart. If you are badly dressed in palace-clothes, I will make you well-dressed in the clothes of the forest, in gay flowers and green leaves. Try to wait in patience for better days that will surely come. At the foot of that hill grow flowers and fruit trees. I will now go and get red and yellow and white fruits, whose sweet smell alone is lovely enough to attract the gatherer. You are only hungry, and I will hasten to fetch those fruits.

[*Exeunt.*]

#### SCENE 4

#### THE SAME

*Enter PRINCESS, carrying the man.*

PRINCESS. With the legs and arms cut off, with the body made beautiful by being turned into a stump, beautiful as a cockroach, short and sweet, whose beauty seems to increase with every look, my lord and lover Stumpy, whom I carry on my back! My luck must be really good to meet such a charming and respectable person as you. Do not hate me, lord, do not be cruel to this body as lovely as a jasmine-bud. I long for you every moment, and I desire to love you as my husband. My lord Stumpy, with the body of gold, I have serious intentions; love, and please accept my proposal.

STUMPY. My goddess-mistress, whose behaviour shows only virtue, who bathes in the flower-scented waters of beauty! Spare me, this suffering slave. Our fortunes can never join, we can never love.

My gratitude to you and your lord is great. Your kindness to me is manifold. Do not test me, my lady, I am really grateful. . . . Or, do you want me to be killed by your lord, and therefore will force me to make love to you? Your words give me pain, even to the very ears that heard your words. Spare me, my mistress.

PRINCESS. Your darling's life, you lump of beauty with a complexion as lovely as a black begging-bowl! Are you going to consider birth and fortune? Have you never heard of a fairy-like princess marrying a leper? Have you no love of physical comfort, have you no material desires? Are you a saint? All human beings do not choose their mates according to class; they have to take what they get. When there is no better price to be obtained, one has to sell a blushing ruby for a basket of rice. . . . You are getting a jewel at that price now and are you going to hesitate?

STUMPY. Inmate of the palace, gold-in-millions, whose beauty is as cooling as a full moon, and whose honour and respectability last for ever, princess born to great fortune. . . . I dare not, I dare not. I do not want to be overdone in the heat of Hell, by sinning against the noble lord that gave me new life. Have I not enough of sin? Have I not been shamed and punished? Do not sin, my royal princess, punishment follows always. . . . Will you not consider your birth, O princess, born in the palace of Sun-kings?

PRINCESS. The fire in my breast, my lord Stumpy! (*Singing*) 'Will you turn away the silver beauty that wanders in the mist? Is it not time to discard your old flower, and wear the emerald-stemmed jasmine-bud that languishes in vain?' You old-fashioned, ancient man! Will you waste time and the day in talking of religion, and using undecisive and inconclusive argument? If you will talk of religion, you will never enjoy the pleasures of this life. O Father Stumpy, will you not have some modern education? Are you afraid to die? 'Everything that has a beginning has an ending!' We all have to die some day. In this world of ours, one has to decide and act quickly. Hurry, hurry, lord.

STUMPY. Princess full of glory, who is above the world! (*Singing*) 'A frightened kid is made more so by being shown a screaming cat. I am in terror, but this modesty increases the terror, and sends shivers down the spine by her words.' I was on the road to death, I lingered at the gate of death. Only my great luck saved my life. I do not wish to die so soon after being saved. I love life, please spare me, my lady.

PRINCESS. The man, to consort with whom a life-time is too short, my limbless lord who radiates with beauty! (*Singing*) 'Our fates, our deeds in previous lives, have united us. If sink we must, we will sink to the bottom of the river-bed, touching the silvery sands. Our love makes our blood red with daring.' Look here, my man, you cannot resist the charms and snares of a palace-born by mere words. I will seize your throat, as a tiger seizes his prey, if you do not hasten to unite us. . . . Yield, O you ancient Father Stump.

STUMPY (*Singing*). 'She sets a new fashion, and discards the old. She throws away the waist-cloth of purest silk, and wears a cotton-handkerchief of the kind that is given away to the poor at funerals.' Restrain, and consider, high-born princess. It is not right, my lady, that a goddess should mate with a slave. Will you leave such a shameful page in history? (*The PRINCESS makes a gesture, threatening to kill him.*) You sea of desire! You night-market woman who sells everything at any price! You that sells your womanhood at any price! All right, I will agree as you seem to love so much your lord without legs and arms. But what will your senior husband say when he returns with fruit? We shall die. Then, how are we going to tie ourselves with ropes of love?

PRINCESS. O you as pretty as a coffin-stone, that is used to nail down the lid, O you lump of flesh that should be gilded with gold-leaf, my darling Stumpy! Do not worry yourself with the problem. Who can stand the wiles of a palace-inmate? My old husband, whose old age makes him crawl, he shall be settled. I will pretend, my noble lord, when he comes, that I want to offer some fruit in thanksgiving to the spirit of the hill. I shall say it in a faint and trembling voice, and I will cry. Can he resist? Oh, no. I will lean on him. I will moan to him, I will say, 'Father-love, brother-friend, beloved golden fruit, I shall die if I do not go to the hill-top.' Who can see through the ready wit and wiles of a woman? That stupid fellow, that half-wit, my other fellow will come with me to the hill-top. Then I will say my prayers, and he will think that I am serious, and will be looking the other way. Then I will push him down the hill-side, and our minds will be for ever at rest, and you and I shall for ever enjoy.

STUMPY. Oh, it is less dangerous to have a monkey by your bedside, than to have a princess beside you. . . . Ha, ha, my lady has just spoken a learned treatise on the virtues and merits of a palace-born. . . . How learned she is, how pure her life! I have got a bundle

of saintliness and good deeds. Her saintly teachings show me the way to eternal peace. Amen, Amen, Amen !

## SCENE 5

## THE SAME

*Enter PADUMA and PRINCESS.*

PRINCESS. The lord of my brow, who gave me new life on the sun-kindled fires of sand, who gave me new birth, master of my gratitude! When coming with you through the blue-brown forest, I saw that high hill, and I prayed to the guardian-god that lives in the glass and golden palace which hangs midway between the hill-top and the sky. My mind met the spirit, I imagined I saw him. And I made a prayer to him to save us, and I said on oath that if we should be saved, I would make homage to him, with offerings of lovely wild flowers, on his many-towered hill-palace. Your little maiden's promise ought now to be fulfilled. The time is most suitable. Lord of my brow, let us climb the hill in laughter and in play, and I will pray to the spirit on the hill-top.

PADUMA. Lady beside whom pearls become dazed and dim, woman who has not even an iota of fault, my sweet-smelling, pretty rose! You are speaking childish-chatter. Your imagination makes you think that you owe it all to the spirit. Do not have pagan ideas. You must realize that it was only our luck that saved us from death, you can see clearly that it was only our good fortune that rescued us. Consider how our brothers and sisters died. Take a moral from their fate, believe only in the religion, act only according to it. Our fortune is exceptionally good, but we have only Karma to thank, and we owe no gratitude to pagan gods. Resist your desire, and let us not go to the hill.

PRINCESS. My man of great glory, you must not forget past kindness, you must not cancel our gratitude to him, by an appeal to fate. Even a stupid god, a minor god, a wandering god, has some power, and he can supplement both good and bad luck. You give me religious arguments, but I am bigoted in my beliefs. Moreover, I cannot resist my imagination. Maybe the spirit is powerless, but some harm is sure to come if I do not make homage to him, for my mind will become distressed with imagined fear. I know I am going against the wishes of my royal consort, but I cannot help it. I must go, I must go. Please come with me, beloved. *[Exeunt.]*

## SCENE 6

PADUMA is hurled on to the stage, and lies prostrate. Enter CROCODILE to one corner away from PADUMA.

CROCODILE. At the foot of mountains, among a thousand streamlets, I have my hillock-palace. I am an animal of valour, and I overcome all opposition by that great and deadly weapon, my tail. I am the king of the river-forest, I am the king of crocodiles. I roam the forest and destroy all creatures that I can find. I jump swiftly and they die. Ah, my luck was in yesterday. I caught and caught, and I ate and ate, until my royal stomach was stretched and made large. But, ho, ho, I cannot find any animal, or fish, or insect, and I am afraid my stomach must be satisfied with being empty today. Still, I am a male, and must not lose heart. That big hill over there looks tempting, and I will journey swiftly there. Before the sun has risen, before the heat makes me tired, I must use my legs at top speed, and hasten towards that mist-browned hill, trusting to luck. Thus shall I make my royal tour for the day. The great glory of this mighty king shall make even the mother earth open herself, so that the royal stomach shall be filled. My lord of the orchestra, show me, please, the way.

[*The orchestra plays, and when it stops, he has arrived at the hill-slope where PADUMA is lying.*]

CROCODILE. I have arrived at the hill, and I will look up the slope. Aha, among the rocky stones and rocky walls, I espy a fig-tree. Ha, ha, it is almost touching the water, as it is weighted down by figs, and poor, starved, Mister Crocodile will feast to his heart's content. Oh, ho, ho, that branch on my right is exceptionally tempting, the fat figs showing among branching leaves. I must eat and burst my poor stomach.

[PADUMA moans faintly.]

Who is that moaning so miserably on the tree-fork? Who is that picture of woe and misery? Are you spirit, or god, or man? How did you get there? This is not the abode of human beings. This wilderness, this doubly-forested hill that seems to touch the sky, this hill-slope leads not to the human-country. Did you lose your direction, or have I lost my correct vision? Tell me the truth, my master.

PADUMA. My friend Crocodile that lives fortified and entrenched

in your hillock-palace, and who wears a coat of armour that no sword or spear can pierce! I will tell you my origin and my history. Think not anything, imagine nothing. I am a royal prince. I struggled through the forest with my consort, a dainty beauty, and playmate of my youth. We reached the river-side, and as we rested, came floating the criminal fellow Stumpy with hands and feet cut off, hurried on by King Death. I saved him, and took him under my care. When I was absent gathering fruit, the sex-mad couple became partners in sin, and they plotted to kill the consort of her youth. She pushed me over the hill-side, and only some remains of my good luck saved me from death to meet you, my noble animal. How wicked and low a woman she is, my friend.

CROCODILE. It is the habit of women to fall in love with any man that they can see. They are ready to cling to any man as husband; they are attracted as by a magnet. Just as the ocean is ever receiving the great rivers and various streamlets, without turning away one, a woman is ready to welcome all men, whether they be old, or sick, or poor, or bad. Do not take it too much to heart, my noble prince. History abounds in instances of unfaithful women.

PADUMA. Friend royal Crocodile, I will follow your kind advice and forget all about the woman. . . . Can you help me to go back to the abode of human beings?

CROCODILE. Worry not. My back is as wide as a house. Ride on it, and rest on it in happiness and in peace for a while, and I will give your farewell to the thick forest and take you back to your city. *(To the orchestra)* We shall soon leave this wilderness for the abode of the humans. . . . I know this prince will be a Buddha in a future world. May I be reborn as a human being when he becomes such a one, and may I be shown the way to Nirvana by him, for saving his life. My lord of the orchestra, just as he will carry me across the river of suffering to eternal peace, I will carry him across this river. Desire you to share my merit? Then play me a tune, and show me the way to his city.

*[The orchestra plays, and when it stops they have arrived at the city.]*

PADUMA. You have rescued me from a fearful fate, King Crocodile. Although you are only an animal, you are of the greatest ability and nobility and wisdom. I can never fully repay my debt to you. How great my gratitude is, only I know. I shall pray for you

and the fulfilment of your desires. Can I do anything to repay you in part?

CROCODILE. My friend, prince, worry not yourself in thinking how to repay me. I respect and honour and love you. I am satisfied by the very fact that I have had the great honour of carrying you on my back. I do not desire anything, my royal friend. What can I desire in this country of man, so far off from my forest?

PADUMA. My thanks. I pray that I be a Buddha, and when my prayer is answered and fulfilled, may I be able to repay this great kindness by helping you towards the attainment of Nirvana. May we meet again in the after-life. Farewell to you, and a pleasant journey to your palace, encircled by forests. Farewell. [Exit.]

CROCODILE. I have done my duty, and I will now return to my many-tunnelled palace. I have come only to make you smile. Let that smile be increased to laughter, while I return to my forest, with the help of the diamond-studded and jewelled orchestra. [Exit.]

## SCENE 7

### THE THRONE-ROOM

*Enter PADUMA and ministers.*

MINISTER. Prince possessing all the virtues and features that a true prince should possess, descendant of the Sun! Your father, the great king, has gone to Mount Mayyu, to live in happiness in the towered palace of a god. We have failed to trace any signs of the seven princes and their consorts, who were exiled by royal order. We have waited and waited for news of you. We wish to listen to your royal words that will tell us of the various happenings since you left this city, and the reason why you have returned alone.

PADUMA. Representatives of the people, great of wisdom, O ministers! Alas, to tell you of the events that happened in the brown forests and the high hills is to kindle a fire in my golden breast. . . . In the emerald-coloured hill-forest, my brothers, their loved ones, and my beloved consort lost their lives through starvation. The memory of their sad fate hurts me in my heart. I am the only scion of my house, who escaped with my life through my good luck, and I arrived back here at last with supernatural help. But what good is it all? I am met only by bad news, and my breast is heaving. I can scarce restrain my desire to weep.



MINISTER. Let me submit this, my lord. In this never-lasting world of ours, everything perishes, and heat and cold, pleasure and pain, go hand-in-hand. Pain, pain, only pain in this life, and that is why one yearns for the Nirvana of eternal peace, where pain is stopped for ever. You, prince, can strive to be nearer to eternal peace, when you have received the heirloom, the throne. Come, my king, ascend the throne of eight silver-white umbrellas, be crowned lord of this realm, while the orchestra plays. [Exeunt.]

## SCENE 8

## THE FOREST

*Enter STUMPY and PRINCESS.*

STUMPY. You, female-cobra that kills the rightful husband, when a man, a future new husband, enters your presence! Emerald and ruby, lake and lily, I and the palace-born, have been united for some time. I feel quite tired of this forest, and desire to return to civilization and boast to others of my luxurious life. Think of a way, princess.

PRINCESS. Man without an equal in this world of men, flower that I wear in my hair, my prince Stumpy! You are not satisfied with ruling a princess in the wilderness. You want to dwell in the shadow of a palace, and boast to citizens of your great fortune. You are my dear lord, and I will carry you in a basket on my head, and take you back to civilization. O orchestra, please befriend us, and help us on our way.

*[The orchestra plays and when it stops, they have arrived at the city.]*

STUMPY. My lady-bountiful, my alms-house that is ready to welcome every man! So this is the great city that is near our forest. It is indeed an imposing capital with towers and gold and beauty. However, we must first look to our stomachs, to still the wind that disturbs us through hunger. We will beg for food, and use our wits to get our meals, Mistress Glue that snares man to get stuck, woman who ties up every man by love. My great glory shall help us. Let us move a little further on, and wait at a suitable place to beg.

[Exeunt.]

## SCENE 9

## A STREET IN THE CITY

*Enter to one corner STUMPY and PRINCESS. Enter KING PADUMA and his ministers on a state tour of the city.*

STUMPY. Look here, you who are never satisfied with one husband, woman whose eyes draw men towards her, my magnetic lump! The king of wondrous power and glory, the master of this city, will soon be passing by, and we must try and win some alms from him. Now, look pleasant and appear to be a woman of pure heart who will never break her marriage vows and who forever treads the path of duty and love.

*[The KING and ministers approach them.]*

MINISTER. King honoured all over this wondrous universe, master to whom this kingdom bows always in appreciation of his virtue and justice! Yonder is a woman of misery from the country, whose devotion to her husband is pleasing to the heart. She is newly arrived in this city, lord. Because of her purity and virtue, she is the most deserving of all in this kingdom to receive alms from your royal hands. If the receiver of your gifts is worthy, stainless, blameless, your giving will indeed be an act of great merit, and will carry you nearer to the Buddhahood you greatly desire. In our opinion, lord, it is but through a great piece of good fortune that you have the opportunity to reward this poor and distressed countrywoman for her immeasurable purity.

KING. Ministers who serve me as my right arm, men whose honour and chivalry shine as the moon, lords whose equals do not exist in this universe, counsellors whose wisdom adorns my throne, whose advice guides my acts, whose learning is immeasurable, my noble statesmen who are greatly loved all over the country! Your words are wise, and I wish to do a great deed towards the attainment of the Great Knowledge. Bring the unfortunate woman before me, so that I can question her, and admire her purity.

PRINCESS. Your humble servant, Misery, kneels at your feet, my noble king, whose body shines with the light of glory.

KING (*aside*). Oh, while pursuing merit, towards attaining my great desire, I am disturbed, for anger blinds me to my religion. This is the wicked wife, this Misery supposed to be so pure. She treacherously tried to kill me, a prince born; yet she carries this adulterous man on her head, in a basket, serving him with heart and

will. I feel ashamed for her, but she feels not thus herself. I must restrain my anger that wishes to punish them at once, and I will pretend that I am a stranger, and learn what she has to say. (*To the PRINCESS*) Mistress Misery from the village, who is that fearsome-looking, terrible man? Is he your brother? Or is he the husband of your youth, whom you worship as a god? Enlighten me, my good woman.

PRINCESS. Lord, we are united by the bonds tied in the golden caves and jewelled monasteries in our previous lives. I married him in youth, and I have loved and honoured him since then.

KING. Village-dweller with all the beauty and charms of a palace-born, please explain to me how you came to be married to that fearful and disfigured being. What are your origins and histories?

PRINCESS. I submit this for your ears, my king. This ugly and limbless body is my true husband, the mate of my heart and intestines, the cousin I married at the tender age of fourteen. He then wandered from the path of purity; goaded on by his past sins, he stole property, and was punished by royal justice. His parents and his relations disowned him when he was lying lost and bleeding, and he was left all alone to die. . . . But I love him, lord, and I fear to break the great moral rules by which a wife is bound to her husband. So I bear all misery, all poverty, and all the grumblings of a crippled man. I fear not even death in the service of my husband. I carry him about in my basket. Going on a journey, carrying him to a place where he wishes to go, makes me feel as if I were travelling towards the abode of the gods, in my gladness. In some ways, I do travel to the abode of the gods, for because of my great devotion to my husband, I am sure to reach the towered kingdom on Mount Mayyu, where I shall laugh and play.

KING. My ministers and advisers, I alone know the truth, I alone can disbelieve the soft words of this couple, because I have taken part in their history. The words of this woman are dried of truth, they are all lies. This is a wicked woman, faithless woman, blinded to morality, made unconscious to morality, through being made numb by lust. I will tell you the true story of this couple, of myself, and of my wanderings. Please listen, my noble lords. They are the two who plotted to kill their prince in order that they should live in adultery. When the six beloved brothers, and my loving sisters died, I was afraid lest she, my wife, this woman, should die. I loved her as my life, and carried her on my back, on hot sand,

on rough, rocky ground, from place to place. She was pale and languishing through thirst, until I cut open a vein on my knee, and gave her my blood to drink. We arrived at last at a safe place beside a great river, and as we rested, this man came adrift on a raft. Seized by great pity, I risked my life and saved him. This woman made him her husband, made this cripple her husband, loving him, worshipping him. And she pushed me down the hill-side, but I was saved by great miracle, and through my friend, the King Crocodile, who brought me back to this city. Now they are here, realizing not that the king of this city is the one they had wronged. Punish them, seize them, torture this woman without honour, as crooked as crooked iron. Take them to the executioner, and let them die in misery, nailed to a wall. My lords, carry out my orders at once.

*[The ministers seize the couple. A minister says in a low tone that as it is the king's birthday, there can be no execution, and the couple must wait in prison for the next day. Exeunt a minister and attendants with PRINCESS and STUMPY.]*

KING. My noble lords, are those poor wretches dead? Have the adulterous Mistress Misery and the cripple died in pain, nailed to the wall? Have they been cut with swords and spears, their hearts and intestines scattered in all directions? Poor wretches!

MINISTER. King who shines on the world, as the moon shines from Mount Mayyu, king to whom all other kings bow, my master of the universe! The miserable woman and the cripple are still alive, my lord. Today is your birthday, and as according to the law and custom of this country, no blood must be shed on the king's birthday, they are in prison, awaiting execution at dawn.

KING. My noble lords, this person, who prays to be a Buddha, forgot his good sense, and trusted his wife too much. All women are as dangerous and frightful as a forest-cobra with poison dripping from its fangs. They will kill their rightful husbands the moment they want a new lover. Their lust blinds them. As the tongue of a snake, their cunning, their desires, their behaviour, are double-tipped. They receive all, just as a roaring fire receives all rubbish. They will love even men as low as dogs and pigs. One is more certain of one's ability to drink up all the waters of the ocean, than of the faithfulness of one's wife. My lords, I have lost all my faith in women, but I should have known better than to have had such faith at all. I shall not punish the couple, my lords; please free them, but

pass orders that they must leave and never re-enter this kingdom, my learned ministers.<sup>1</sup> [Exeunt.]

<sup>1</sup> Many of the passages in this play are ugly, but in the original, much of the ugliness recedes to the background, because of the intense lyrical beauty, which I fail to reproduce in this translation.

## APPENDIX VI

### THE WATER-SELLER<sup>1</sup>

BY U PON NYA

SCENE 1

OUTSIDE THE CITY

*The orchestra is playing when the PRINCE enters, walks up and down for some time, and sits down at one corner of the stage. The orchestra stops, and a strong-looking man, clad in coarse and dirty clothes, enters with two water jugs strung on a pole on his shoulder. He is a water-seller.*

MAN. Oh, how difficult it is in this towered and many-roomed abode of human beings to get the food one needs. One does not realize the depths of one's stomach until one tries to fill it with a limited amount of food. However, when I can get some red, some black, or some broken rice, I swallow it, I wash it down with vegetable soup. And, lads, life seems worth living then, and I glory in my manhood. Aha, sometimes I can afford to buy some little fresh fish even, and then my mouth soars towards the sky. Yes, but with all my incessant selling of water, I can fill the stream of my stomach with such good meals only three times a month, at the most. For this great self, silver and copper do not exist; at least, I am blind to them. My poverty is as complete as a fire. Come, I am a man, and I must not lose heart. I must be content with the place in life assigned by my luck, for it will certainly lead me along the path of prosperity and greatness. I once saw a blind cock win a fight because of his luck, and the whole audience roared with delight and admiration. If luck wills it, and I hit the target of good fortune, I shall be clothed in gold. Well, well, I must hurry before the sun rises and makes me hot. I must sell my sweet water, so that there can be enough rice for my stomach. My lord of the golden and diamond orchestra, help me on my rounds.

<sup>1</sup> This play has been considered on pp 81-6.

[*The orchestra plays, and the MAN leaves.*

*A woman water-seller with a pot of water on her head, enters, and the orchestra stops.]*

WOMAN. Oh, I am afraid I am known all over this royal city as the champion in poverty. My luck has lost its way and cannot find me. Philosophers say that riches and poverty come in turn to a person. But it seems I am for ever darkened by poverty. I have to look after my stomach by selling water, and my head is always aching with fatigue. I have to be satisfied with broken rice. I have to wash it down with soup made from vegetables I myself gather, though my stomach often protests, as the food is so tasteless and vile. Oh, if only I could sell enough to buy red rice and some vegetables! But my luck is so blank, and I have to steel myself and swallow the food I can obtain. Oh, I want, I need, I long for vegetable soup. If my horoscope flowers, if there is some accident, if my gods take me on the right road, I shall meet a Mister Right, and marry him, the Lord Vegetable, and then, I shall get drunk with luxury, and eat and eat vegetables until my lady waxeth fat. Alas, it is no good wasting time, railing at my poverty, philosophizing on my poverty, dreaming against my poverty, and losing my sense of reality, of direction, of north and south. Good rice I shall never get, broken rice I can only get by hard selling. I will gather up my skirt, the wonderful skirt of many colours that scarcely covers me, the wonderful skirt of a thousand patches, and a million stitches, that wonderful dress covered with dirt. I will gather it up, put my pot on my head, and will wander round the town, as dainty as a waxen doll. The sun will soon come and I must hurry. My lord of the orchestra, play me a tune to show me the way.

[*Exit. The orchestra plays, and the PRINCE, who has been silently watching the water-sellers, rises and makes his exit.*]

## SCENE 2

### THE THRONE-ROOM

*The orchestra stops. Some ministers enter with the PRINCE. The king is dead, and the country has been patiently awaiting the return of the PRINCE from his university in a foreign land. They crown him king. He thanks them, and leaves the stage. The ministers also rise and leave. The orchestra again starts to play. In outline only.*

## SCENE 3

## OUTSIDE THE CITY

*The two water-sellers enter separately. The orchestra is playing. The two are seen to nod and greet each other. The orchestra stops.*

WOMAN. The man with a little hair-knot almost hiding the brow, the water-seller with broken pole and strings, the man with dirty dress and un-oiled hair, my ancient father. . . . Please do not think me too inquisitive, but we are in the same trade, and you must excuse me. May I inquire whether you have been able to hoard any silver, after you have satisfied your needs, from your earnings? My darling brother, please tell me the truth. As far as I can see, you have not got much property; your dress is very dirty, and it scarcely clothes you. What sort of dainty rice, what sweet soup, have you for your meals? Please consider me as your sister, consider yourself as my big brother, and please tell me all.

MAN. My water-seller with luxuriant hair, aye, so luxuriant that the knot is as big as an orange-pip, lady with a dress all patched up, lady who is so beautiful that men turn their eyes away! Your brother, this master of commerce, the possessor of a glorious right arm, has been able to save a lot of money, after clothing himself in silk and velvet, and after feeding himself with sweets and fat. Yes, sister, a lot of money stored up in iron boxes, to wit, a silver halfpenny. Riches are a curse, I can't sleep at nights for fear of robbers and thieves and swordsmen. I have to get up every night and sentry-go round my house. As to my royal meals, for breakfast and dinner I have lovely colour-mixed rice, made lovelier through mixing it with that jewel of foods, some golden vegetable. Of course I do not like much salt, nor oil, nor any other things tasty as those. Ahem, my food is so rich that I have to swallow it hard, though my poor mouth protests. As to my clothes and dresses, you can judge for yourself. So, my little sister, I am well filled with riches and honour. Now, don't take me for a poor man.

WOMAN. My little Cræsus, my great rich man, my possessor of a silver halfpenny! Your little sister has also managed to hoard the same amount of silver. I have always wanted to join my property to that of a suitable man, and take him as my beloved husband. But, I have to be aware of fortune-hunters, and have hidden my wealth so cleverly that no man knows of it. Aha, isn't it funny that you should



have the same amount of silver as I have? Perhaps we are destined to build up a fortune together, perhaps our fates are united and entwined. My wealth has also been a source of worry to me. I am always in fear of robbers, and tremble lest the king should seize my wealth as a danger to his throne. I have always wanted someone to look after my silver, to share the heavy burden of wealth. But good men are not common. And I have to remain an old maid, though suitors are by the thousand. My golden breast quakes in fear and anxiety, for there is no husband to protect me and mine. When will the pickle ferment, when will the man of destiny, worthy to rule my riches, come? Perhaps the time is far yet, my dear brother.

MAN. My lady-millionaire, with riches unspendable. Have you not heard of that saying of the wise:—‘If you choose too much, you fail to get any. If you make it too dainty, it will not have beauty’? Oh, let us not make our history long, with all sorts of arguments, and love-makings, and with following man-made conventions. Our destinies are the same, our professions are the same, our fortunes are of the same amount, our age, our height, the measure of our beauty are equal. One might almost think that a god had made us twins. The rain falls when the fields are dry, the chorus-leader meets his chorus. The time long-awaited has come. Let us not retreat. Let us take each other as husband and wife. Ha, ha, I am a giant, I am an ogre, I am a gnome. I will seize you, force you to marry me, if you should refuse my proposal.

WOMAN. My life, Master Water-seller! Is that the way to make love, all force and hurry? Your courting is too violent. One might think you were an official, giving orders to villagers. You cannot grow a vegetable garden in one month, you cannot get all the vegetables, and as much as you want, after only a month’s gardening. Please don’t be cross, but I am a woman, I have some maiden modesty. I cannot marry in a callous way. My big brother, I don’t know what to do. Please think and advise me. (*She pauses and thinks for a moment.*) Do not think that I distrust you, but a woman has to be careful, she has to have some proof that the man has serious intentions. And we have to do all things according to convention, as then only will our neighbours respect us. Now, if you will bring your silver to me as proof that you really are serious, we will join our silver, and men shall respect our great wealth. Hasten, love, and bring your silver, and then we shall live for ever after as happy as a king to whom all men and all gods do homage, on his many-towered and

many-storied palace, with plays acted before him, with lovely maidens and valiant men around him, with his beloved consort laughing beside him, with scents and perfumes and flowers all floating in the rooms, with dainty food and delicious sweets. My brother, hasten, hurry, and we will be as happy as that king.

MAN. The prettiest woman in the whole world, my flower that brings victory, my woman the equal of whom I shall never find in this life. . . . You are so beautiful, you are so priceless that my heart is heavy lest you should only be laughing at me. After going all the way to get the silver, suppose you laugh at me, and refuse to marry me? Please promise me now that you will marry me as soon as I have fetched my treasure, and I will at once hurry.

WOMAN. O, Master Water-seller, who thinks of all sorts of arguments, which none the less are sweet to the ear! I promise that, I promise that. If you are not satisfied I will take any oath you want me to.

MAN. Aha, my fellow, today is your lucky day. The king of the gods favours you now and you are going to have the best of wives. I will now go and bring the silver which I have always loved, which I have never spent though often I was nearly starved. I hid it in a crack in the wall on the other side of the city, and I will now use it to get the lovely jewel, my future wife. Though it is noon, though the distance is great, though the streets are as hot as roaring fires, though I am already fatigued and my heart and chest are all worn out, I shall run and run. Love, await me inside the gate. I shall hurry, hurry. My lord of the harp, my lord of music, help me on my way.

[*Exit running, followed by the WOMAN.*]

#### SCENE 4

##### THE THRONE-ROOM

*Enter KING and ministers. They converse.*

KING. As I look from this tower, I see a man in the street, in front of the courtyard. He seems to be in a hurry, but very happy. Under the red-hot noon-sun, treading on the fire-hot pavement, he is waving his arms about, and laughing and dancing; all the time, he is running. Rather an unusual sight . . . Look, my ministers, look, look, look! He is there, still running, skipping along, smiling with pleasure, oblivious of the sweat dripping from all over his body, unconscious of the heat that burns his feet. Look at him,

his body, his demeanour, his movements, they all bear witness that his heart is glad, and his mind is happy. Please stop him, my lords, and bring him to me.

*[A minister leaves, and presently returns with him.]*

KING. My man, my good fellow from the country, you do not seem to be like others, you seem to be above nature. It is midday and the earth is smoking with heat. Yet you go running and dancing. Why the hurry? Why the gladness? Why the laughter? Tell me the truth, my man, without fear or deceit.

MAN. My noble king, I am Mister Poverty, who earns his living by selling water, carrying his pots all over the town, with the chest strained almost to bursting. And with all that fatigue and hard work, I have been able to save only a silver halfpenny, which is hidden in a crack in the city wall, near the northern gate. Now my betrothed wants me to join it to her wealth. So I am running to get that miserable store of silver, to please my woman whom I love as my life. I stop not for the sun-heat, I bow not to the burning sand. I run and hurry to get my little wealth, O lord of my brow, Master of the golden palace.

KING. O my poor man, fancy your lover sending you all the way to the golden gate to fetch such a little coin! It is at least three more miles to that gate, and the sun burns your heart. Is that little coin worth all that distance, all that heated distance? Are you going to run round the town for a halfpenny? Your blood will go dry with heat, your health is sure to suffer, if you have not injured it already. Do not be a stupid fellow. I will give you a silver penny, and so return at leisure to your wife.

MAN. Let me submit this, lord. I receive in stomach-gladness the silver that you give me in pity. However, I also wish to run and fetch the little coin that is hidden in the wall. One cannot bid farewell to one's property however trivial it may be. I love my little silver, lord. It is trivial, it is worthless, but I want it all the same, my lord.

KING. My fellow from the country, you want to eat, while you are driving a cart; you wish to catch two fishes at once; you want both my compensation and your own money. You love and are attached to that little piece of silver without any valid reason. Well, if you love silver so much, I now give you a million silver coins, and you can not only please your wife, but even kill her by the weight of

the silver, if you should give it all to her. Keep your dignity, be a gentleman of leisure, take your place as a worthy citizen, and forget all about that little piece of silver hidden in a crack. Do not make people smile at you, let not there be a scandal, you must not give even a side-glance to that little coin.

MAN. I receive with grateful heart and humble submission your great gift of a million silver pieces. However, I still wish to run and fetch the lovely little coin, which I earned by selling sweet and fresh water, the reward of my labours.

KING. My village-dweller, you are clinging to that little piece as desperately as the opium-eater clings to his drug. I want to do a work of great merit. I like you. Though you are but a poor man, there are certain qualities in you, and I am sure you will make a good ruler. I give you a half of this flowered kingdom. I will make you the crown prince, and I will give you that royal house on the north side of this palace, and give you the golden-palaced, kingly luxury, if you will but agree to forget that worthless silver in the city wall.

MAN. I receive your gift with a glad heart. However, with all that glory I still wish to run and fetch that lovely little piece of silver, which I earned with my labour, and which now lies forlorn in the wall.

KING. My wise lords, whose wisdom and glory and learning are great as any in history since the world first began, I hope to become a Buddha one day, and to supplement my prayer, I wish to give alms, I wish to make this man happy. I wish to make him crown prince and give him half my powers and my wealth. Please make the necessary orders, if you agree, my noble lords.

*[The ministers deliberate and discuss among themselves, and then tell the KING that they agree. The KING leaves the scene. The ministers dress the water-seller in the full regalia of a CROWN PRINCE.]*

PRINCE. Ministers and advisers whose wisdom shines and glows, my lords that are now paying me homage! Thanks to the king of kings, the master of the universe, the greatest of men, thanks to his kindly heart and pitying mind, I am now a joint ruler, the crown prince, master of a golden house. I look round for the mistress of my golden house, one who will share and increase my pleasure. And I think of one, who must have been my mate and friend in past lives. I fell in love, I am still in love, with a woman water-seller who often

passes this palace. My old love is still my only love. I love her as my life, I adore her as my heart, I like her as my intestines. I wish you to make ready the royal carriage that is gilded countless times with gold, look and search for your princess, and please bring her under a thousand golden umbrellas surrounded by court maidens and bold guards. [Exeunt.]

## SCENE 5

## THE SAME

*Enter PRINCE with ministers. The woman water-seller with other ministers follows. They greet each other in great joy and pleasure. The courtiers bow to the PRINCE and PRINCESS.*

PRINCE. Wise ministers, I have obtained an honour, a glory, a pleasure, which is so difficult to obtain. But I cannot forget my halfpenny. I try to reason with myself, I try to preach to myself, but it is of no avail. If the Lord Buddha himself should now stand before me, and preach to me, I could not forget my lovely little coin. I cannot wait, some one might rob me of it, of that little piece of silver hidden in the wall. My lords, call forth my carriage, my horses, my elephants, I will go and fetch it myself in state. If you please, my noble lords. [Exeunt.]

## SCENE 6

## THE SAME

*Enter PRINCE with ministers. The halfpenny has been fetched. A herald enters, announcing that the KING wishes to go to the royal garden and rest pleasantly, now that the sun has gone down, and the afternoon is cool. The KING desires the PRINCE and PRINCESS to accompany him. In outline only. Exeunt.*

## SCENE 7

## A WOODLAND SCENE

KING, PRINCE, and lords-in-waiting enter, followed by PRINCESS and ladies-in-waiting. The PRINCESS wishes to laugh and play in one part of the garden. She leaves with her ladies. The KING gives his lords leave to wander about also, and they leave. The KING and PRINCE are left alone. The KING is tired with the excitements of the day, and falls asleep on the PRINCE's lap.

PRINCE (*to himself*). Aha, my prayer has been answered, my luck has come home. Now is the chance to get the whole throne, to mount it without any rival. My royal lord trusts me, has dismissed his lords, and now sleeps on my lap, laughing in his dreams. It is so complicated, it is so dissatisfying for two to rule a kingdom, and the solution is now in my hands; the king is now solely in my power, with no effort of my own. I will seize the hair-knot on the royal head, I will grip it with all my strength, and then I will make a cut at the neck. If I can do that, my rival and my danger will pass, and I shall win city, palace, and courts of justice. Yes, I will do it. Take heart, lad, and unsheathe your sword. (*He unsheathes his sword.*) No. The journey as planned by my mind is smooth and fair, it will take me along the road of success. But it will lead me on to do a barbarous deed, a shameful deed. I was the bottom man, a wasted man, a blunted man. This master of my gratitude gave me all this glory, through the greatness of his heart. How can I be so cruel, so heartless as to kill him, my greatest friend? I shall be as a pig that digs up the hole in the earth that has just given him delicious food. No, no, the deed is shameful, unworthy, and I must forget it. (*A pause.*) Come on, you are a man. If you are going to think of moral rules, if you are going to be a man of purity, how can you succeed in this life? It is no good considering future lives, if the present one is to be spoiled. You must be heartless, forget all thought of gratitude, when you are being given a glorious chance. Seize it, seize it, lad. Success comes only after deliberate planning, heartless execution, and swift action. I shall be the sole king, I shall sit in solitude on my golden throne. Now! (*He lifts up his sword.*) No, oh, no! Is it right that such a man as I, who has no support, no friend, no relations, no glory nor strength nor wisdom, should kill such a one as this noble lord on my lap, whose kindness and nobility and glory are well known all over the world? I have been saved from lifelong poverty and misery by this dearest king, and I have been given powers and riches second only to those of the king himself. It will be like killing the Buddha. I shall be overdone in the fires of Hell, I shall be for ever cursed in history. Think, think, use your good sense, my crown prince, and restrain yourself from killing your greatest friend. (*A pause.*) That is all talk. Come on, man. If you want to eat the flesh of a monkey, you cannot look at his pathetic face. There is no choice for me. I will have to do it and win, as a valourless cock has to fight and win, when he is attacked. In this

life, if you do not attack, you will be attacked. Come on, fight, win for yourself. After all, there will only be this one little sin, and think of the power I shall have afterwards. If you want to be great, kill now, at once, swiftly, surely. If he awakes and sees you with drawn sword, you are done for. Attack, cut, kill! (*A pause.*) Stop! stop! That will be an awful deed. This is a prince, without fault, glorious, kindly, stainless, pure. And he is the master and sole owner of your gratitude. Restrain, let not your body follow your mind. Stop, stop. You are just in time to save yourself from the meanest act of your life. [*He sheathes his sword. The king awakes.*]

PRINCE. Pure in mind, one who prays for the Banyan Tree of Buddhahood! This man of misery, this blank of riches, this poor-boned fellow, has attained an honour and enjoyment he never had experienced even in his dreams. He obtained all this happiness without any effort on his part, easily, smoothly, thanks to the kindness of your heart. Yet, I just made three attempts to murder you, the master of my rice, the raiser of my status, the lord of my gratitude. O lord wrapped and clothed in glory, pardon this wretch, this man of punishment and misery.

KING. My lord, ruler of half the kingdom, my master of wonderful fortune, my prince on whom the flame of glory waves in brightness! You did wrong in trying to sin against one who raised you to a half-throne through sheer regard for you; you were a perfect stranger, and not my brother, nor are you a palace-born. As perhaps you know, I am ready to give even my head to any that wishes to have it. If someone should come and ask for my mind, I will cut open my golden breast, burst open my golden heart, the flower of my blood, and try to get my mind. You have no need to kill this god of the kingdom. If you want my throne, I give it to you today, without any reservation or condition. I will leave my throne, so that you shall be free to take control of the lovely city, the abode of the ruling umbrella, the possessor of towers, and in which musical drums tell the hour to the dwellers. Make me one of your officers, and I shall serve you humbly and well.

PRINCE (*sobbing*). O drum of glory, lord of this slave's brow, future conqueror of the road to Nirvana, I am afraid, lord, to stay on amidst this temptation, this worldliness, this love of power and wealth. I dare not live on the edge of this forest of sin in which tiger-like and leopard-like ambitions abound. My greed is without any limit in depth. Greed is always with us, and it is so difficult to

control. I have heard of King Mandat, who wanted the whole of the six-storeyed paradise, not content with half the kingdom, which the king of the gods had given him in friendship. I am afraid, lord, I am sure to be entrapped in this net of greed and desire. If my noble king will permit me, I wish to leave this worldly princehood, and retire to the peaceful forest, to meditate and pray, so that I shall be able to drink the cool, clear water of Nirvana.

KING. My brother of the crown, my man with oft-repeated prayer, my man above this worldliness! I admire you for being able to leave all this enjoyment at one moment. I give you full permission to retire to the forest glade, and to peace and purity.

PRINCE. With all my heart, I now do homage to thee, my noble lord. Please pardon this wretch for his sins, and farewell, lord.

KING. My friend of the crown, I forgive you fully, and pray that you should obtain peace and happiness in the pure life you are going to lead from now.

*[Enter PRINCESS, with her ladies, from one side. From the other enter courtiers.]*

PRINCE. Possessor of emerald-diamond eyes, beauty, Mistress of the northern royal house, O guardian of my life! Your lover committed a great sin. I tried to kill this noble king, to rob him of his kingdom. The thought of it now makes me shiver, the memory of the narrow escape from such a sin makes me sweat. It shames me that I should have been so barbarous. I ought to put a sword through my chest, to say goodbye to this human world. When I asked for his forgiveness, this king not only gave pardon, but offered to give me the whole of his kingdom. What a wonderful master, how noble is this lord of the white umbrella, this stainless gold-nugget. I sinned against such a man, and my eyes are now opened. I have said farewell to luxury and pleasure, and I am soon retiring to the forest-glade, where peace for ever reigns. Farewell, love. I wish you to remain and rule the northern house, my love, my little life, my woman with the beauty of a palace-born, of a princess of the sun. Farewell.

PRINCESS. Glory that flowers, man whom only my great luck brought to me, my orchid that I wear always in my hair! What did you say, lord? If you go alone to the forest, how can I live on, how can I hearten myself, how can I stop myself from languishing and from becoming gloomy? I can scarcely believe my ears. The words



hurt me so. You are my only ruby, my only necklace, my only emerald. I shall only be parted from you when the golden butterfly, my soul, leaves my body. My master whom I always yearn for, my master to whom I am addicted, how can I laugh alone in this city, in spite of its towers and golden streets? I will come with you, lord, and try to tread the path of purity, in imitation of my dearest prince.

*[PRINCE and PRINCESS leave on one side, hand in hand. The KING bows to them. The others kneel down and watch them go. The KING leaves on the other side, followed by the others, slowly and silently, except for the half-suppressed sobs of the ladies-in-waiting, as the orchestra starts to play.]*

## APPENDIX VII

### WIZAYA<sup>1</sup>

BY U PON NYA

#### I

#### THE OPENING SCENE

#### THE THRONE-ROOM

*Enter KING and QUEEN, with ministers.*

(*Heard off.*) Help, O king, help us! Your son, Wizaya, is ill-treating your people. Punish him, kill him, my lord! Ask your ministers, send for witnesses. Your people humbly beg you to save them. Help, O king, help!

KING. My four ministers who destroy the flower of our enemies, whose right arms are destined to accomplish glorious deeds, whose valour cares not for death! My noble lords who are as brave and graceful as the king-lion looking out of his silver den in the centre of his forest and at the base of an imposing mountain! I have ruled this kingdom for many years, but I have never heard before the angry yet pathetic cries of my people, which you now hear. Hark, lords, their shouts are loud as thunder. Tell me, lords, the reason.

CHIEF MINISTER. Hearken, my lord! Your first-born to whom you have given the title of 'Great Wizaya', is a fire-machine. With his seven hundred slave-followers, he roams your city and your kingdom, robbing, stealing, ill-treating all at will. Your elder son, your heir, your Wizaya is but a common robber, bandit, thief, and the people are anxious and troubled, and cannot stand his cruelties any longer.

KING. My able lords! If what you say is true, my kingdom, my country, will soon turn topsy-turvy. The matter must be questioned, inquired into, and the people must be satisfied. Please send for the glorious prince of the Lion dynasty, my elder son, Crown Prince Wizaya. Please order him to come at once, my noble lords.

[*Enter Wizaya.*]

<sup>1</sup> This play has been considered on pp. 86-92.

Son of the Front Wing, whose rays of promised glory shine like diamonds, heir to the White Umbrella that shelters this kingdom, the gem of this universe! My people and my ministers accuse you of disturbing the peace of the country with your wild behaviour. You are accused of robbing some and ill-treating all. Look out of the window, there are people in terror and in distress who demand your punishment. Without deceit and without hiding anything, tell your father the truth, my beloved son.

WIZAYA. My mighty father, who renders sweet justice from your throne adorned with carvings of budding lilies of the valley, king worthy to be the elder brother of all glorious rulers, monarch destined to be a god in the next existence! Your loved son has always been taught to tell the truth by his beloved parents. Father, I have read the famous *Jatakas* of Thuwunnashan and Thotpadaka, which illustrate the virtue of fearlessly telling the truth, of upholding the truth. I promise you faithfully, royal father, to answer all your questions truthfully.

KING. Good son, tell me at once whether my ministers' reports about you are true.

WIZAYA. Let me submit, my lord, let me submit this to your ears. Your ministers fail in their duty, they tell you untruth. Half-truth is untruth, my loved lord. Their reports regarding me are too mild, they have not told you all that I have done. They have told you only a thousandth part of my wild doings. Your people are all liars, for they tell you not the whole truth, not all the truth. Your ministers have not fully reported all my crimes, and therefore they are guilty of negligence. I beg you to dismiss them at once, my lord.

KING. Flags of my kingdom, learned ministers who ably perform your many duties, as you realize, I have brought up my two sons with loving care. Let alone scolding them, I have not even once frowned on them. But it seems, my lords, that my first-born is a youth doomed to a life of wickedness and crime, a prince not worthy of the name, a person who excels in foolishness and stupidity. Perhaps I am to blame for loving him too much, perhaps I have spoiled him by sparing the rod. But I am being punished, for as you have just heard and witnessed, in full audience he has shamed me. I must follow the custom of the rulers of the land and sea, powerful kings, and must not love my son more than my people. As his guilt is proved, and as he has been ill-treating my loyal subjects, I have no choice but to punish him at once. My noble lords, seize Wizaya and his seven hundred retainers, and execute them without a moment's delay.

[*Ministers seize WIZAYA, but the QUEEN restrains them.*]

QUEEN. Lord of my brow, my necklace of orchids that I always wear, friend of the sun, my beloved! Your handsome son Wizaya is my heart, my life, my soul. Do not punish him, my loved lord, please forgive him this once. He means no harm, he has only youthful foolishness and pride. He mixes in bad company, and through bad influence he has erred. But he will not repeat his offence, my lord; his youthful stupidity shall not again prevent him from realizing what he is doing. For my sake, your queen's sake, your love's sake, please spare my Wizaya, and I will see that he is not foolish again.

## II

*The rafts are ready to be sent adrift, and WIZAYA bids farewell to his parents. He is no longer the irresponsible, defiant, and wayward son.*

WIZAYA. King whose glory is loftier than the highest mountains, friend of the sun that is now shining from the sky, cleared of clouds by winds, my father who has been my protector since childhood! Your beloved son must go now, must be sent adrift on the merciless currents of the ocean. Dear lord, dear father, dear king, I deserve the punishment, for my crimes are many and dangerous; I am indeed a danger to the peace and welfare of the kingdom, and it is just and right that I and my seven hundred retainers, with their families, are now banished from your pleasant city. Father, I now bid farewell to you. Kneeling down on the ground and lifting my hands to my brow, I tender homage to you as my king, and respect and love as my father. King destined to rule the whole world, dear father, your son now bids you his last farewell. Mistress of virtue and beauty, queen as lovable as a lily-bud, mother who gave me life and nursed me tenderly on your golden breast when I was but a child, and not yet wayward, my father, god of this kingdom, is just, and I do not protest against his decision to send me adrift on the ocean. I must now start my voyage on the pathless sea, exposed to wild waves and wilder winds. Mother, I kiss your feet, and bid you farewell. Sorrow not for your wayward son, my darling mother, and try to stop those pearl-like tear-drops that dim the lustre of your emerald eyes. Farewell, beloved mother, mountain of my gratitude. Farewell, mourn you not, but please pray for me and send me your

love over the ocean. Your love and prayer will reach me and protect me, even though the wide ocean separates you from your son. Dearest mother, sorrow not for me.

## APPENDIX VIII

### *KAWTHALA*<sup>1</sup>

BY U PON NYA

#### I

#### SCENE 2

THE THRONE-ROOM AT THAWITTHI

*Enter KAWTHALA and ministers.*

KAWTHALA. My four masters of wonderful strength, which makes it possible for you to bear the heavy burden of the affairs of this state, my four flags that wave supreme in this golden city, O ministers with all the six ministerial virtues! The great king, who now rules Bayanathi, was a page in his youth, serving me, worshipping me, bowing to me, crawling before me, in this very palace. Now, because of his great ability and good luck, he rules his mighty kingdom, receiving homage from all other kings. When a king without glory meets one with glory, he ought to bow and kneel. Therefore, I ought to submit, but I cannot. How shall I address him, speak to him? I shall feel self-conscious, I shall feel shy to say 'my lord' to him, my face will wear an expression awkward and old and troubled. My prestige will suffer, my self-respect will be destroyed. I am a king; I was a king when he was only a page in my court. I do not wish to be a king under him, I do not wish to be a little ink-blot on a page of figures. I will take a risk. Rebel from his suzerainty, let us rebel, my lords. Blow the trumpet, sound the drums, call my soldiers and commanders to arms. Let us make our weapons sparkle and shine, let us practise singing songs of victory, my wise lords.

CHIEF MINISTER. Let me submit this, my royal lord. Your ancestors, the glorious kings of a glorious line, always considered the safety of their subjects. They loved the people as the red blood in

<sup>1</sup> This play has been considered on pp. 92-6.

their golden breasts. They wished that their commanders and soldiers should not shed one drop of blood without cause. Above all things, they wanted peace and happiness for their kingdom. We suggest, noble king, that you forget not the policy of previous kings. If a neighbouring country wishes to wage a purposeless war, the wisest thing is to ignore all attempts to draw you into war. The greatest weapon against all dangers and threats is patience bound with love. If you do not desire war, there can be no wars against you. If you desire war, many wars, not only one, will be waged against you. Fight not with hate, fight it with love. In this world, my king, love begets love, kindness begets kindness. Consider this in your heart, consider this in your mind, my lord. Is it not better to march to victory with the weapon of submissiveness than through the weapon of hatred? Your faithful ministers beg you to pause and consider.

KING. My grand lord who has both strength of body and wisdom of mind, my minister who serves well the umbrella of the kingdom, my lord of the noblest birth! What you say is true in many cases; after the fall of Pagan, Ava, Sagaing and Pinya, rival kingdoms, saved themselves from destruction through treating and agreeing and loving each other. But there are cases too, in which open fights alone could and did save the thrones. I know it is against the religion to shed blood, but you cannot succeed in worldly affairs if you are a pure and religious man. You cannot follow both the religion and the world. Although I am alone, although I rule a small country, it does not follow that I will lose. You have read how Mahaw, though alone, fought and tamed one hundred kings at once. I am a king, born of kingly blood, made of kingly bone. My mouth is red with superhuman powers, my glory shines brightly, my right hand is lit up with the fire of strength. I am a man of destiny, why should I not be supreme in this world? Let alone a human king, I can fight the king of the gods himself. I do not wish to crouch in fear, shivers of fright shall not make me cold. I will write my name in history. Away, away, away, my noble lords, sound the drum of victory, man the walls. Fly banners of defiance, make ready to stand a siege. Our city will be besieged, but we shall conquer, we must conquer.

CHIEF MINISTER. My king, if you desire it, we will agree. There are always two ways, smooth and rough. As you desire to pursue, as you have determined to pursue, the rough way, we will follow you and try to conquer by force of arms, if you wish it, even Mount Mawmy, the shade of the gods. Now that you have decided on war

we will try our utmost to ensure victory to our kingdom. Numbers alone do not ensure victory; the fact that the king of Bayanathi will have all the support of his vassal kings, should not make us think that victory can never come to our side. King Lion alone could be successful against a thousand anger-mad elephants, and a cat could conquer a thousand rats. We dare to risk our lives, so that you should be king over the king of Bayanathi and his hundred kings.

KAWTHALA. It will boot us well. I will now rest for a few moments on the middle tower of gold, I will rest as softly, as quietly, as untroubled as a jasmine-bud. I will rest so that I shall be strong in mind and in body for the coming struggle. Make ready, prepare, my noble lords. We will think, we soon shall have new strength, our wits will be ready, and our banners shall boldly ride the wind. Victory shall be ours, my lords. [Exeunt.]

## II

## SCENE 11

## A ROOM IN THE PALACE

*Enter QUEEN with a newborn babe. Enter a lady-in-waiting.*

QUEEN. My lovely little king, my little silver, my little butterfly, my silvery moon that fades the moon in the sky, my bracelet with the sweet smell of lovely flowers, my little man, my breast-blood from Kawthala, your father's bone and blood! Look, girl, isn't he pretty? Have you ever seen such a pretty babe, such a well-born baby? Look at his brow, look at his features, does he not look like my lost master? Oh, he opens anew the wound, I long to die, I wish to see again my lord, my Kawthala whom I shall see no more. Woman, haste, hurry, give me some water, I feel dazed, I feel dizzy, my heart is falling away from my body. . . . Oh, oh, the child is a son, he will want his throne back. Oh, there will be rebellions, his people will want him as king. The king of this palace will see the danger, will realize that in this boy-prince lies the danger. As the boy grows up, rebellions and disorders will increase in my own city of Thawitthi. Bayanathi will then execute my son. O my poor child, why were you born at all? You are certain to be put to death by your stepfather king. . . . I think it is better to kill you now, when you will not realize your misfortune and your approaching death. . . . Also, it is easier to part with you now, before you have learnt to say sweet little things, do little acts. . . . It will also save your country



and this kingdom from disorder and bloodshed. You, too, my darling, will be saved from torture and shame. Forgive me, my little child, bone of my bone, blood of my blood, son of my womb. My faithful lady, please hasten and throw this lovely little prince among the graves in the cemetery. . . . His poor luck wills it so. . . .

[*Exeunt.*]

## APPENDIX IX

### WAYTHANDAYA<sup>1</sup>

BY U PON NYA

When he turned dramatist U Pon Nya was already famous as a humorist and satirist. He excelled especially in burlesque, where his humour and satire were without any bitterness. In Paduma, his first play, he repressed the comic muse, and the satire there was without artistry through bitterness. In *The Water-seller* there was just a trace of humour and light satire. In *Kawthala* there was a comic character, and it contained many humorous scenes, but the humour tended to be coarse. In *Wisaya* he again repressed his comic spirit, and satire also was entirely absent from that play. In *Waythandaya*, however, he returns to his old role of humorist-satirist, and gives us two scenes of the gayest laughter.

In the following extract, from the third scene, he burlesques the heroic style of some contemporary playwrights.

#### SCENE 3

THE FOREST IN WHICH WAYTHANDAYA IS LIVING IN EXILE

*Enter SAYTA, the guardian-hunter, with his dogs.*

SAYTA. Hark! I hear a strange noise from that hillock on my right. A faint sound, but a strange sound, an ugly noise. What can it be? Is it the cry of an elephant in pain? Oh, no. It sounds as if some children are crying in terror. But how can that be? I must go and investigate at once. I will go in haste with my bow and arrow. No, stay! I must be careful, for I do not know what strange enemy I may meet. I must take my hounds with me. . . . O you enemy over there, you are in for it! Know you not that this is Master Sayta, possessor of a valiant temperament, Master of the golden bow? And this is my domain, this forest is my domain in which I dwell and spend my days in jasmine-happiness. O enemy over there, even if

<sup>1</sup> This play has been considered on pp. 96-9.

you are the king of elephants come with his army, I am not afraid. My arrow will pierce all mine enemies. Listen, my faithful hounds, hearken, my valiant dog-officers, Cunning-red, Striped-red, Solitary-survivor-of-the-litter, Bitch-leader, your master, this mighty hunter Satya, this possessor of the big bow, your beloved Generallissimo, thinks that we shall soon find some business for our mighty army this day. So we must form ourselves into battle-array and march on to attack the enemy.

Lieutenant Beautiful-brave and Lieutenant Victor-black, the son-in-law of Bitch-leader, will lead the vanguard. Ensign Dark-rain-cloud will act as scout and see that the hounds do not march too close together. White-forepaws, son of a wild-dog and nephew of the famous Mistress Yellow, is appointed, because of his ability and bravery, to be the orderly officer for the whole army. Flighty, flirtatious bitches, who have been divorced from their lawful husbands, must march together in the centre of the main body, and you, gallant Female-Lieutenant Shoulder-stripes, I promote to be Captainess, and I hold you responsible for the discipline of those divorced bitches. Dogs over there, youths who are wild and still fiery-tempered and who are always showing their ivory teeth, you are placed under the uncle of the hairless Bitch-leader, an importation from Lower Burma, the Pegu-hound, Captain Victor-red, who is now granted letters-patent appointing him to be Commander. You will run swiftly to that hill on our left, usually occupied by eagles. You will hold the hill at all costs, for it will be the base of our operations, and the whole army will retreat to it if things should go against us. Widows, old maids, diseased dogs, mothers with suckling babes, lame, rheumatic, anæmic dogs must not accompany the army. You must remain behind here. Your duty is to guard our huts, and watch the entrances to our kitchen and our dining rooms. See that no stranger breaks in here to steal our treasures, to wit, our cooking utensils, our cooked rice, that half-baked rabbit's leg, and half-consumed wing of chicken. Dog Sapphire, Dog Like-a-cat, though old, do not forget your past glories and past experience in wars. You will please see that discipline and ordered life remain unimpaired in my absence, and guard you well my hut. March on, dogs, to battle and to victory. [Exeunt.]

## APPENDIX X

### THE HISTORY OF THATON<sup>1</sup>

#### AN EXTRACT

SCENE: THE PLACE OF EXECUTION

*Enter the QUEEN, her adopted father the NOBLEMAN, and the GOVERNOR of the city.*

QUEEN (*singing*). 'O father, am I not too young to die? I have not laughed long enough in the palace to die so soon, I have not played long enough in this world to depart so suddenly. Father, is not life ugly, is not my lord the king cruel?'

Father, dear father, you yourself will have to kill your beloved daughter. You are my executioner. Beloved, do not be afraid to kill me. They will kill me in any case. I do not care. Consider your own life, father.

NOBLEMAN. Poor, miserable daughter, my poor child. How can I hurt this sweet, pink rosebud, how can I throw away my priceless jewel? Child, loved child, what have we done to deserve all this torture? When the king wished to wed you, I was so happy because you would become our queen. How could we have guessed that pretty fortune would soon turn all ugly? Oh, oh, my daughter, are the ropes which tie your hands together hurting you? O cruel, cruel king!

GOVERNOR. My friend, I must enforce the king's orders. You are to execute the beautiful queen. I have but to do my duty. Put your dear daughter in this green-coloured velvet bag, and then beat her to death.

QUEEN. Father, please do not prolong my torture, I am losing consciousness. Listen father, please listen to your daughter's dying wish. When I am dead, please put my body on a raft and send it adrift on the river, so that people will see it and pity my miserable end. And on this spot, on this place where you and I are cruelly

<sup>1</sup> This play has been considered on pp. 112-15.

treated, please build a pagoda, so that people will remember me and pity my end. I want all their pity, I want all to remember my tragedy. I desire all to know that the cruel king values not his emerald. Father, I am fainting, oh, dearest father, please let me die quickly. Let me enter the velvet bag now. *[She is put in the bag.]*

GOVERNOR. Sire, sire, do your duty, here is the stick. Hold, hold! The queen must bow to the palace three times before she dies, as it is the custom of all prisoners on the scaffold.

*[The QUEEN is taken out]*

QUEEN (*bowing towards the palace*). King. I do not love you now, I hate you, I will never forgive you. Even in the next existence, I will hate you. Oh, no, King, I forgive you, even though you are heartless to your queen.

NOBLEMAN. Oh my daughter, my daughter. How can I kill you, my loveliest daughter, my sweet child?

QUEEN. Father, my dear father, think not of that, but end my suffering soon.

GOVERNOR. No further arguments, my queen. My heart is quaking and dried with grief and pity, but I have to obey my king.

*[The QUEEN is put again in the velvet bag.]*

QUEEN. Oh, cruel life, oh, cruel love! Where is my brother? Oh I want to see him. Why is he not here? Father, father, I am becoming unconscious. Quick, father, quick, relieve me of my pain.

NOBLEMAN. Farewell, my loved one, my dearest child. I will put you on the raft and build a pagoda and fulfil all your wishes. Oh, oh, must I kill my child?

GOVERNOR. Sire, sire, do as you are ordered to do, and relieve your child of her torture.

NOBLEMAN. Farewell, my child, my child. *[He gives a blow with the stick.]*

QUEEN (*faintly*). Oh, oh, it hurts. Father, father, where are you? Where is brother, where is king? Father, oh my father. *[Dies.]*

## APPENDIX XI

### *THE BABOON BROTHER AND SISTER*<sup>1</sup>

The decadent dramatists, in spite of all their faults, are not without artistic ability. The following extract is an example of the decadent style at its best.

Although the atmosphere of the following scene is one of pity and horror, there is restraint in the use of 'blood and thunder'. Moreover, after the audience has been moved to pity and horror, its equilibrium is restored by the closing lines of lyrical beauty, in which it is shown, through references to the executioner's home and the beauties of nature, that ordinary life is not sordid and complicated but beautiful and simple.

#### SCENE: THE PLACE OF EXECUTION

*Enter EXECUTIONER with the QUEEN (the baboon sister).*

QUEEN (*singing*). 'My lovely son, my golden necklace, O my little unfortunate, where are you? Your mother is dying, she is leaving you all alone in the world as if she hates you so. . . .'

O executioner, let me go back for one moment, please give me my son. Let me nurse him, hug him, warm him on my golden breast for just one moment. . . . O my brother, where are you? Do you not know that your sister is going to be killed? Come, come, come and save your beloved sister. . . . Son, my son, he will be crying now for he must be hungry and looking for me, his mother. . . . Oh, I am helpless. Swords and sticks are around me. The executioner looks fierce. Oh, oh, before the sword touches me, before the spear opens wide my breast, before the stick makes me swoon, I am in pain. Yet I do not die. I am in great pain and yet live on, so that I am tormented the more. Unfortunate that I am! Why can I not die at once?

<sup>1</sup> This play has been considered on pp. 115-21.

EXECUTIONER. Handsome maiden, so young to be a criminal, too sweet to die on the scaffold! You will have to die soon. The sun has set and time is passing. No letter of pardon has arrived and the execution must be carried out. Weep not lady, fear not, my beauty, steel your heart and prepare for the end. Look at the king's palace, gleaming with gold and jewels in the yellow and red rays of the setting sun. Bow to it three times as all criminals on the scaffold are bound by custom to do.

QUEEN. Yes, executioner, I am ready to die, but I beg of you to give me a few moments more so that I may pray. Oh, oh, my thoughts are not on the religion, my mind wanders to my brother and my son, my loved ones. Oh, woe is me, I am afraid I shall become a spirit after my death, half-tied to this human world, always hovering about my loved ones. I do not care. Whatever happens, whatever I become in the next existence, may I be able to help and look after my beloved ones, and may I be able to make known my tragedy to the world. (*She bows towards the palace.*) Three times have I bowed to thee, Master of the Palace! You are cruel, you are merciless and cunning too! Oh, you are being foolish, my king, for this sin will bear you down to hell to suffer countless tortures. . . . O my golden master, my heart, my love, why are you so heartless and blind to my love for you? [*She faints.*]

EXECUTIONER. I must hurry and do my duty swiftly. I will use this heavy stick and strike her on the throat, as comely as a water-lily. One blow will be enough. [*He strikes and the QUEEN dies.*]

Yes, the deed is done. This is indeed a glorious act of merit on my part, alas! Poor girl. . . . Though the law requires that the body of a criminal should lie on the scaffold for seven days, I cannot be heartless enough to enforce it. I will cover the jasmine-like body with thorns and sticks and leaves, so as to protect it from crows and vultures, and thus preserve it for burial by her people. . . . I have done my duty, accomplished my wicked deed, and that is the end of the matter. No need for philosophy. . . . I must hurry home, for my beloved wife is waiting for me, looking out from her window, shyly, sweetly, expectantly. The sun of amber and gold has set, and from that drooping tree which is gradually sinking into slumber, a sweet young owl is peeping at me, hooting playfully. My lord of the orchestra, can you reproduce his music? [*Exit.*]

## APPENDIX XII

### SAW-PHAY AND SAW-MAY<sup>1</sup>

#### AN EXTRACT

##### A ROOM IN SAW-MAY'S HOUSE

*Enter SAW-MAY. In a soliloquy, she says that she must mislead HOPEFUL into thinking that she is in love with him, so as to prevent him from discovering that she is making arrangements to elope with her real lover, SAW-PHAY. Enter HOPEFUL.*

HOPEFUL. I am sick of it all. Your father and you are always making me do this, and do that, sending me on all sorts of errands, even making me wash your dishes. I hope and hope and hope, and then what do I get? Nothing, I am sick of it all, so I am going to serve in another household and run after a new girl.

SAW-MAY. Oh, Mister Hopeful, what did you say? Now, now, beautiful, handsome, pretty lover, where are you going? Some people can be really cruel and hurt those who love them. Where are you going? Oh, Hopeful, why do you hate me so? Do you feel towards me as if I were a stranger? Do not go, please, Mister Hopeful.

HOPEFUL. Oh, oh, what did you say? Do you mean that you love me? What sweet words you are saying! When is the marriage going to be? Oh, but I think you are teasing me? Will you say on oath that you will marry me?

SAW-MAY. I swear solemnly that I shall marry dear Mister Hopeful when the sword swims through the water, when the sun sets in the east, and when the lily flower grows on the top of the driest mountain. But, Mister Hopeful, what is the use of all this swearing on oath? I will marry you now if you will bring me some banyan flowers, which I desire to wear on my happy wedding day.

HOPEFUL. Oh, I feel so happy that I did not catch what you said. Yes, darling, I do not care for oaths and all such things, for it is obvious that you love me and further argument is purposeless. Let

<sup>1</sup> This play has been considered on pp. 121-6.



me see, it is lucky that the season of banyan flowers is passed. That is good, for it will give me time to save some money before the next season comes. You know, I want some money to buy a mosquito-net curtain for our nuptial night. But, oh, it will take some time to save the money, and in the meantime you will marry the king.

SAW-MAY. Oh, oh, Mister Hopeful, do not look so sad. I am so grateful to you for loving me. Oh, darling little Hopeful, I do not care for father or king or crown. I do not wish to be a queen. I do not want a palace, all I want is you. I confess I am afraid of my father, but we can elope before the king has time to marry me. Shall we elope, O Mister Hopeful, dear Mister Hopeful? Please say 'yes' By the way, I hope you will not be so heartless as to go and tell father about the proposed elopement, will you, love?

HOPEFUL. Ho, ho, aha, ha, ha, what a wonderful plan you have thought of. Yes, beloved, we will run away tonight. Oh, little mistress, I love you so much that I could happily spend my days in washing your under-clothes. O Saw-may, I love you so much that I want to kneel down and kiss your little toes, tickling them with my lips. Why did you tell not me of your love before? Why did you appear so indifferent to me?

SAW-MAY. Hush! Here comes father.

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